

THE
DESPOTATE
OF
EPIROS

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By
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OXFORD
BASIL BLACKWELL
MCMLVII

TO MY WIFE

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CONTENTS

	<i>page</i>
I THE FOURTH CRUSADE AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE DESPOTATE	I
2 MICHAEL I ANGELOS. 1206-15	24
3 THEODORE ANGELOS. THE KINGDOM OF THESSALONIKE. 1215-25	47
4 ECCLESIASTICAL REPERCUSSIONS. THE DIVISION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH.	76
5 THEODORE ANGELOS, EMPEROR OF THESSALONIKE. 1225-30	103
6 MANUEL ANGELOS, DESPOT AND EMPEROR OF THESSALONIKE. 1230-37	113
7 MICHAEL II ANGELOS. THE END OF THE KINGDOM OF THESSALONIKE. 1230-43	128
8 MICHAEL II ANGELOS, DESPOT. JOHN III VATATZES, EMPEROR. 1244-54	141
9 MICHAEL II ANGELOS, DESPOT. THEODORE II LASKARIS, EMPEROR. 1254-58	157
10 MICHAEL II ANGELOS, DESPOT. MICHAEL VIII PALAIOLOGOS, EMPEROR. THE BATTLE OF PELAGONIA. 1258-60	169
11 THE RESTORATION OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE. CONCLUSION.	186
12 ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE DESPOTATE OF EPIROS AND THE KINGDOM OF THESSALONIKE. 1204-61	196

APPENDICES

I The Petraliphas Family	215
II John Apokaukos, Metropolitan of Naupaktos	217
III Topography of the Despotate of Epiros	222

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GENEALOGICAL TABLES

I	Despots of Epiros and Emperors of Thessalonike	<i>inset after</i>	237
II	The Asen Dynasty of Bulgaria		236
III	Albanians and Serbians		237

INDEX

MAP of Epiros, Thessaly, and Macedonia.

page

227

PREFACE

THE Despotate of Epiros was one of the many by-products of the Fourth Crusade and the capture of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204. The dismemberment of the Byzantine Empire by the Crusaders led to the establishment of a number of succession states in the provinces, whose rulers vied with each other in their campaigns against the common enemy. In Asia Minor a relative of the last reigning dynasty in Constantinople set himself up as 'Emperor in exile' at Nicaea, and claimed the right to direct the affairs of Byzantium as lawful heir to the throne. In Greece another member of the same family succeeded in saving a corner of his country from the invaders and organized an independent state behind the barrier of the Pindos mountains in Epiros. Heroism and treachery go hand in hand in the service of patriotism. Broken pledges as well as feats of arms helped to transform the Despotate of Epiros from a mere resistance movement into a Kingdom, whose ruler proudly adopted the title of Emperor of the Romans in defiance of the self-appointed Emperor at Nicaea; and the overthrow of the so-called Latin Empire and the recovery of Constantinople from the Crusaders became the object of the Kingdom in Greece no less than of the rival Kingdom in Nicaea. For a time that object seemed within its grasp. But one fatal miscalculation led to the downfall of its most ambitious ruler; and from that moment the Kingdom of Nicaea rose to the ascendancy.

The prize of Byzantium ultimately fell to an undistinguished general of the Nicene army; and with it went the glory and the honour that dazzled the historians of the age and blinded the eyes of posterity to the achievements and claims of the Despots of Epiros during the fifty-seven years of exile. But the Despots themselves could not forget the brief hour of greatness that was their heritage. Michael II, the last serious rival to Nicaea, continued to think of himself as Emperor; and his successors kept alive the memory of a more extensive Kingdom within the narrower con-

fines of Epiros and Thessaly, never, save under the compulsion of armed force or expediency, acknowledging the sovereignty of an Emperor at Byzantium, until both Emperors and Despots alike passed under the Turkish yoke.

A very distorted picture of the relative importance of the Despotate of Epiros and the Kingdom of Nicaea is presented by the only contemporary historian of this critical period of the Byzantine Empire, George Akropolites. Akropolites, who lived at Nicaea, shared first in the suspicion and later in the open hostility of the Nicene Emperors towards Epiros. The purpose of his work was to prove to succeeding generations that the history of the Kingdom of Nicaea unfolded inexorably and by divine right towards the restoration of Byzantium; and through his careful account this partisan conception has been accepted as historically just. Unfortunately no contemporary history of Epiros has survived to state the claims of the Despotate in equal terms, and such manuscripts as outlived the whims and rapacities of the various Turkish governors of Epiros go back no further than the fourteenth century.

The first serious attempt to compile a history of Epiros was made by Aravantinos in 1856. His sources are nowhere quoted, and it may be that he had access to material now lost. But it is often evident that the gaps in his knowledge have been filled more by imagination than by reference. A much more scholarly account of the Despotate appeared in the exhaustive history of mediaeval Greece written by Hopf in 1867; and it was on the basis of Hopf's researches that the Corfiote Romanos produced his History of the Despotate some thirty years later. This was the first and so far the only monograph on the subject.

Only a year after it appeared an important step towards the elucidation of the history of the Despotate was taken by V. G. Vasilievsky in the first publication of a part of the correspondence of John Apokaukos, Metropolitan of Naupaktos in the early thirteenth century, which is contained in the Codex Petropolitanus Graecus 250. This Codex was removed from Mount Sinai to St. Petersburg in the nineteenth century, and the historical significance of its contents soon became apparent as the publication continued. The task was undertaken by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, but the fruits of his labours are scattered over the

pages of so great a variety of journals and periodicals as to make the work of their co-ordination and the assessment of their bearing on the history of the period extremely difficult. Combined with the better-known collection of the writings of Demetrios Chomatenos, Archbishop of Ochrida, made by Cardinal Pitra in 1891, and some of the letters of George Bardanes of Corfu which had been edited by A. Mustoxidi in 1848, the correspondence of Apokaukos threw much new light on the history of the Despotate; and in 1898 A. Meliarakes produced the first fully-documented work on the subject in his *History of the Kingdom of Nicaea*. Like the Byzantine writers before him, however, Meliarakes included his chapters on the Despotate rather as appendages to the history of Nicaea, and it emerges first as a tolerated offshoot and latterly as a rebellious mandate of that Kingdom.

Since his time there have been further publications of the Codex Petropolitanus, though some still remains unedited; and in 1909 the series of letters of John Apokaukos contained in the Codex Baroccianus 131 in Oxford was published by S. Petrides. This material, amplified by the researches of M. Wellnhofer and Professor Bees and others, has never been incorporated into a history of the Despotate. The more recent researches of J. Longnon, notably his *History of the Latin Empire of Constantinople*, have greatly contributed to an understanding of the problems that faced the Byzantines as a result of the Fourth Crusade. Lastly, there is the archaeological material both in Epiros itself, published in great part by Professor Orlando in 1937, and in the form of coins and seals in the museums and private collections of the world, little of which was known to earlier historians of Epiros.

Not many English historians have interested themselves in the latter centuries of Byzantium. George Finlay devoted a few pages of his *History of Greece* to the Despotate of Epiros; and some of the nineteenth century gentlemen who travelled so conscientiously through Albania and the north-west of Greece produced inaccurate but often colourful accounts of the subject. Special mention, however, must be made of William Miller, who more than once touched upon the Despotate of Epiros in his various researches into the history of mediaeval Greece, and of Alice Gardner, whose history of the Lascaris of Nicaea is still the

standard work on the lives and achievements of the great rivals of the Despotate.

In 1820 the Revd. Thomas Smart Hughes remarked on the subject of compiling a history of the town and district of Ioannina in Epiros that 'since no historian has left us any account of its origin, or progress, or the character of its people, in those ages when human beings were reduced to the lowest point of degradation and all the energies of mind corrupted or destroyed by the enervating influence of the Byzantine government . . . its annals are enveloped in an obscurity which I am afraid no labour of research can now dissipate'. It is hoped that the following pages will, to some extent, belie those despairing words.

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D.M.N.

Dublin, 1957.

CHAPTER I

THE FOURTH CRUSADE AND THE FOUNDATION OF THE DESPOTATE

At the turn of the twelfth century the Byzantine Empire was in a feeble but not a hopeless condition. Under the Emperors Alexios, John, and Manuel Komnenos, it had enjoyed almost a hundred years of prosperity; and the reaction that set in after the death of Manuel in 1180 was not entirely due to the incompetence of his successors. The end of the Komnenian dynasty brought a wave of faction and intrigue in the capital, and when the central authority of the Empire was weakened the provinces seized the opportunity to rebel. Isaac II Angelos, who had himself reached the throne by a revolution, was deposed in a counter-revolution organized by his brother in 1195. He was blinded and cast into prison together with his son Alexios; and his brother succeeded him as Alexios III. The repercussions of events in Constantinople were felt far afield. In the north the Bulgarians, inspired by two nationalist leaders, Peter and John Asen, had already broken out into revolt against Byzantine domination; and in 1197 Bulgaria was organized into an independent Empire by a third member of the Asen family, Kalojan or Joannitius. In Serbia also the standard of nationalism was raised against Byzantium by the Grand Zupan, Stephen Nemanja. While the Bulgarians and Serbians fought for their independence the eastern frontiers of the Empire had to be defended against the ever-present menace of the Turks.

In the western world the growing embarrassments of Byzantium were observed with interest rather than sympathy. For almost a century crusaders, pilgrims, and adventurers had been making their way from western Europe through the provinces of the Byzantine Empire to the Holy Land. The Emperors, who were perhaps more realistic in their approach to the problems created by the infidel, had regarded the Crusades with some diffidence, and had done their best to confine the crusaders' activities within

reasonable limits. The crusaders for their part regarded the Byzantines as foreigners in race and religion, treacherous by nature and schismatic by perversity, and they tended to attribute their own misfortunes, and not least their defeat at the hands of Saladin, to the intrigues and treachery of the Byzantine Emperors. The suspicions between Latins and Greeks were mutual and inbred, but they were fostered by the Crusades.

At the same time, however, the Crusades had opened the eyes of the western world to the commercial and strategic potentialities of Byzantium; and the weakness of the Empire at the end of the twelfth century seemed to invite exploitation. The possibilities of the situation had been perhaps most clearly realized by Venice and by the German Emperor, Henry VI, the son of Frederick Barbarossa. The Venetians had for many years enjoyed special commercial privileges in the capital and the provincial markets of the Empire. Their merchant-ships almost monopolized the trade of the Levant. Manuel Komnenos had tried to curb the influence of Venice by granting similar privileges to the rival merchants of Genoa and Pisa; and in the reign of his successor Alexios II efforts had been made to break the Venetian monopoly altogether. In 1182 anti-western feeling among the Byzantines had shown itself in a savage massacre of the Latins resident in Constantinople. But by then it was no longer possible for Byzantium to live in isolation from the west; and the last of the Komnenian Emperors, Andronikos, had been compelled to call again on the help of the Venetian fleet in defence of his Empire.

German interests in Byzantium were less calculated than those of Venice but more comprehensive. Henry VI of Germany had inherited the idea of a universal Empire, which should include Byzantium, from his father Frederick Barbarossa. He had acquired the Norman Kingdom of Sicily by marriage in 1194. The last Norman invasion of Greece had culminated in the capture and sack of Thessalonike in 1185. Thessalonike had been recovered almost at once; but, like his Norman predecessors, Henry VI regarded Sicily as a convenient point of departure for the conquest first of Greece and then of Constantinople. His plans were cut short by his death in 1197; but he bequeathed his ambition to his brother and successor, Philip of Swabia, who had

already strengthened his interest in Byzantine affairs by marrying a daughter of the Emperor Isaac Angelos.

The idea of a Fourth Crusade sprang from the mind of Pope Innocent III. It was to be the crowning glory of his pontificate, and arrangements were instituted in 1198, barely a year after his accession. Various causes contributed to delay the preparations, however, and the response to his call was not as great as he had hoped. The Kings of France and England were otherwise pre-occupied. Germany was divided between the supporters of Philip of Swabia and of his rival Otto of Brunswick; and the only reigning monarch who was prepared to take the Cross was King Andrew of Hungary. The Doge of Venice, however, was willing to give active support, and a number of Frankish and Lombard knights and barons joined the expedition, some in search of salvation and some in search of plunder. It was originally decided that the crusaders should make for Egypt, which would be useful as a base for the re-conquest of Jerusalem. No one could foresee that their course would be set instead for Constantinople. But as the months of preparation went by the leadership of the Crusade passed more and more into the hands of those who had personal or commercial interests in that direction.

The fleet which the crusaders had hired for the transport of their army was led by Henry Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, whose envy at the wealth of the Byzantines was added to a deep hatred resulting from a personal injury that he had received at their hands; and in 1201, when the expedition seemed almost ready to sail, Tybalt of Champagne, who was the army's commander-in-chief, suddenly died. The command passed to the Lombard Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat. Boniface had many interests in the east. He was a brother-in-law of the Emperor Isaac Angelos, who had recently been dethroned; and he was known to be a friend and supporter of Philip of Swabia. Almost simultaneously the young son of the Emperor Isaac, Alexios Angelos, escaped from the prison in Constantinople in which he had been incarcerated by his uncle Alexios III, and arrived in Germany. It was his intention to seek the support of his brother-in-law Philip and to ask him for help in overthrowing the usurper Alexios III and restoring his father to the throne of Byzantium.

Philip himself was too deeply involved in his own domestic

troubles to make any promises. But the temptation to lay the Empire of the east under obligation to the west was too strong to be ignored. Philip promptly got in touch with the leaders of the Fourth Crusade at Venice, and suggested that the crusading army might be used to right the wrongs done to Isaac Angelos. He invited Boniface of Montferrat to Germany to meet the young prince Alexios and discuss the project. In the meantime, the Crusaders, unable to raise the money required by the Doge for the hire of their ships, agreed to do a service for Venice, by way of compensation, in recovering from the King of Hungary the Dalmatian port of Zara. They left Venice in the autumn of 1202.

Zara was stormed and captured in the name of Venice in November. The Pope was horrified that his Crusade should have attacked the territory of the only King who supported it, and alarmed that Venice should have so great a measure of control over its activities. But the capture of Zara was only a minor incident in the progress of the Fourth Crusade. For the commander, Boniface, had meanwhile been negotiating with Philip of Swabia and Alexios Angelos, and a plan had been evolved that was to change its course completely. If the Crusaders would help to re-establish his father Isaac on the throne of Byzantium, Alexios promised to pay the money that they still owed to Venice, and then to send them on their way to Egypt with plentiful supplies and a company of Byzantine cavalry. As a more lasting reward he promised that his Empire would henceforth acknowledge the spiritual supremacy of Rome. When the news of this offer reached Zara in January 1203 opinions among the knights of the Crusade were divided. But for the Doge and for Boniface the possibilities seemed almost limitless, and the majority of the Crusaders accepted their decision, among them Count Baldwin of Flanders and his brother Henry. The Pope, who had already excommunicated the Venetians for inciting the attack on Zara, was not consulted. The Doge, Boniface, and Baldwin took it upon themselves to draw up an agreement with Alexios Angelos, and in the spring of 1203 the Crusade set sail for Constantinople.

Alexios had boasted that the city would submit without resistance, and that the usurper Alexios III would surrender at the mere sight of the crusading army. But in the event the city had to be taken by storm, under the energetic leadership of the Doge

himself. Finally, Alexios III took to flight, and his brother Isaac was released from prison and set again on his throne, with his son as co-Emperor.

It now remained for the young Alexios to fulfil his promises and to pay the Venetians and the Crusaders the reward for their services. His father Isaac was persuaded to give his consent to the terms of the agreement, and the leaders of the Crusade settled down to wait outside the city for the agreement to be honoured. It soon became clear that Isaac and Alexios would not be able to meet their obligations. Feeling in Constantinople was strong against them for having sold the Empire to the west; and their desperate efforts to raise money from their subjects and to impose obedience to Rome on their clergy increased their unpopularity. Early in 1204 a revolt broke out. Alexios was murdered and Isaac thrown again into prison, where he died a few days later. A new Emperor was proclaimed who would fight rather than curry favour with the Franks. His name was Alexios Doukas Mourtzophlos.

The savage removal from the scene of the two Emperors for whose restoration the Crusaders had taken such pains provided the excuse and the opportunity for them to exact their own reward and satisfy their own ambitions. Since the Greeks could not or would not honour their agreement they must be treated as open enemies, and their debts must be paid from the wealth of their own country. The capture of Constantinople and the conquest of the Byzantine Empire became the object of the Fourth Crusade.

In March 1204, when their preparations for an assault on the city were complete, the Crusaders and the Venetians anticipated their victory by drawing up a contract concerning the management of the Empire that they were to conquer. Arrangements were made in the name of Boniface of Montferrat and Baldwin of Flanders, on behalf of the Crusaders, and in the name of the Doge, on behalf of the Venetians, for the sharing out of the booty, the election of an Emperor, and the partition of the provinces of the Empire among themselves. It was agreed that if a Crusader were elected to the imperial throne then the Venetians should have the possession of the church of Saint Sophia and the right to elect a Patriarch of Constantinople. The imperial palaces

should belong to the Emperor, together with one quarter of the capital and the provinces of the Empire. The rest should be divided equally between the Crusaders, who would hold their acquisitions as fiefs from the Emperor, and the Venetians, who would be independent landlords.¹

The first attack was beaten back with heavy losses; but only a few days later, on 12 April 1204, the Crusaders managed to storm the sea-wall on the Golden Horn, and forced an entry into the city. The Emperor Alexios Mourtzouphlos organized a gallant but desperate resistance; but the defence collapsed when the Crusaders set fire to a large part of the city. Mourtzouphlos fled in the night, and by the morning of 13 April the surrender was complete. The Doge and the leaders of the Crusade moved into the Emperor's palaces, and the capital of the Byzantine Empire passed into the hands of the Latins.

The plunder of Constantinople lasted for three days. The city was ransacked and robbed with unparalleled savagery. When order was restored the proceeds of the looting were collected, the Venetians were paid their dues, and the remainder was divided as arranged. The contract drawn up in March 1204 had provided that the new Emperor of Constantinople should be elected by a committee consisting of six Venetians and six Crusaders; but only the Crusaders nominated candidates for the position. The Doge of Venice had no wish to undertake the responsibilities of managing a feudal army and a feudal Empire. He would be content to manage the Patriarchate. The choice for Emperor was thus narrowed down to Boniface of Montferrat and Baldwin of Flanders. For the future of the Latin Empire the election of Boniface would have been the more promising. He was already related to the Angelos family, and had just improved his prospects by marrying the widow of the Emperor Isaac, Margaret of Hungary. The Doge, however, favoured the appointment of Baldwin, and the Venetian electors were therefore able to swing the vote against Boniface. Among the Crusaders competition was so keen that the appointment of the members of the electoral committee led to violent disagreements between the partisans of Boniface and Baldwin; but the dispute was settled by nominating six bishops as their representatives. It was further agreed that the elected Emperor should present his defeated rival with a consolation

prize consisting of the Byzantine provinces in Asia Minor and the Peloponnese. In the end Count Baldwin of Flanders was elected; and eight days later, on 16 May 1204, his coronation as 'Emperor of Romania' was solemnly performed in the church of Saint Sophia.²

When the pomp and ceremony were over the Crusaders began the task of conquering the Empire whose capital they had occupied. The division of territory among them led to a serious quarrel at the outset. As the unsuccessful candidate in the election for Emperor Boniface of Montferrat demanded that Baldwin should hand over to him the provinces of Asia Minor and the Peloponnese, according to their agreement. Baldwin consented so readily that Boniface asked for a further concession, namely that he should be allowed to relinquish his claim to the Asian provinces in exchange for the town and province of Thessalonike in northern Greece. Boniface had good reasons for making this request. His brother Rainier had been granted the title of King of Thessalonike some twenty-five years earlier on his marriage to a daughter of the Emperor Manuel; and his new wife, Margaret, being a sister of the King of Hungary and widow of the Emperor Isaac II, would be both happier and more useful in the Balkans than in the distant plains of Anatolia.³

But Thessalonike had still to be conquered from the Greeks, and as events turned out Baldwin was the first to get there, marching along the Thracian coast by way of Mosynopolis, Kavalla, and Serres in pursuit of the Emperor Alexios III. Although he had at first agreed to the proposed exchange of territory in favour of Boniface, Baldwin now refused to keep his word; and a civil war, which might have split the Latin Empire permanently and disastrously, was only averted by the intervention of the Doge of Venice. The matter was resolved without bloodshed, and Baldwin admitted his error. Boniface agreed to do homage to the Emperor in return for the recognition of his title to the Kingdom of Thessalonike.⁴

When peace had been restored the conquerors set about the distribution of the provinces of the Byzantine Empire among themselves. An agreement, known as the Partition Treaty, was drawn up by a commission of twelve Crusaders and twelve Venetians, to divide the territory that remained to be conquered

between Baldwin, the Doge of Venice, and the rest of the Crusaders; and the map of the Empire was split up into fiefs and principalities, many of which were never more than names to their overlords. The parts of Thrace outside the boundaries of the Kingdom of Thessalonike were divided into three parts. The eastern and the western provinces were then similarly portioned out. Baldwin received the provinces of Asia Minor and the adjacent islands; while the mainland of Greece with the Ionian and Aegean islands were shared between the Venetians and the Crusaders. In northern and central Greece the Pindos mountains provided a convenient line of demarcation. The Crusaders claimed most of the land to the east of this barrier, as well as the Cyclades islands. Venice claimed Epiros, Akarnania, and Aitolia to the west of Pindos, as well as the Ionian islands. The Venetians, through the activities of their merchants, were already well acquainted with much of the territory that they were now authorised to appropriate; and in the south of Greece they contrived to secure possession of all the more profitable stretches of coast and islands on the trade route between the Adriatic and the Black Sea.

The portion allotted to the Crusaders in the north of Greece was dominated by the influence of the new Kingdom of Thessalonike, which had been left out of account in the Partition Treaty. The eastern boundaries of the Kingdom extended as far as Mosynopolis in Thrace, but its frontiers in Macedonia and Thessaly had yet to be defined. The Crusaders could hardly hope to conquer their allotted lands independently of Thessalonike. It was therefore agreed that Boniface of Montferrat, as King of Thessalonike, should assume command of the army that was to conquer and divide the rest of Greece, while Baldwin of Flanders, as Emperor of Constantinople, conquered the Byzantine territories in Asia Minor.⁵

Both in the east and in the west the Crusaders met with resistance from the Greeks. The collapse of Constantinople led to a state of confusion and anarchy in the provinces. Refugees from the capital, provincial governors, and mere adventurers were able with varying success to profit from the situation and glorify their opportunism with an aura of patriotic fervour. There were also certain parts of the Empire which, under the rule of Isaac

II and Alexios III, had already been granted a great measure of independence from the central authority in Constantinople. Their administration had been committed by the favour of the Emperors to members of the imperial family or of the local landed aristocracy. Such districts as Philadelphiea and Trebizond in Asia Minor, and the province of Nikopolis in the north-west of Greece, being already largely autonomous, were easily organized into centres of resistance against the Latins.

In the east, although the armies of Baldwin were at first victorious, two independent Greek states were founded by relatives of Alexios III, one at Trebizond on the Black Sea, the other at Nicaea only some forty miles from the capital. The 'Empire of Trebizond' lived a life of its own and had little influence on the course of affairs further west. The Kingdom of Nicaea, on the other hand, played a vitally important role in the constant war between the Greeks and the Latins; and it was from Nicaea that the capital of the Byzantine Empire was finally restored to the Greeks in 1261. The founder of the Kingdom of Nicaea was Theodore Laskaris. He had formerly held a military command under Alexios III, and Alexios had given him his daughter Anna in marriage and honoured him with the title of Despot. He had been active in the defence of Constantinople in 1204, and may even have been offered the crown after the flight of Mourtzouphlos from the city. But he preferred to make for Asia Minor to recruit an army of resistance in the eastern provinces. He established himself first at Brusa, and from there fought a losing battle against the Crusaders until 1205, when he was able to make his headquarters at Nicaea.⁶

On the mainland of Greece opposition to the Crusaders was perhaps less serious than in the east. At the beginning of the thirteenth century Greece was divided into four Themes or administrative districts. The Peloponnese was one Theme, while to the north of the Gulf of Corinth lay the Theme of Hellas, which included Attika, Boiotia, Phokis, Lokris, and part of Thessaly. West of the Pindos range of mountains was the Theme of Nikopolis, comprising Akarnania, Aitolia, and southern Epiros; and to the north that of Thessalonike. Of the Ionian islands Leukas alone remained under Byzantine control. Corfu had been seized some years before by a Genoese pirate, Leone Vetrano; but the

majority of the inhabitants still regarded themselves as Byzantine, and when the Crusaders stopped there on their way to Constantinople Vetrano seems to have disappeared. He returned when the coast was clear. Cephalonia, Ithaka, and Zante had already been detached from the Empire for some years, following the Norman invasion from Sicily. For a time they had been governed by the Sicilian Admiral, Margaritone of Brindisi, until, about 1194, they passed into the possession of one Maio or Matthew of the Roman family of Orsini, who had married the Admiral's daughter. Maio Orsini recognized the suzerainty of Sicily over his islands; and though he styled himself Count of Cephalonia, his status was little higher than that of the pirate Vetrano in Corfu, with whom he was in alliance.⁷

In northern Greece the Crusaders had little difficulty in establishing their authority. Thessalonike seems to have submitted to Boniface of Montferrat without much resistance. Further south the archon of Corinth and the Argolid, Leo Sgouros, made a brief but spirited attempt to hold the invaders at bay, though his motives were as selfish as they were patriotic. In the summer of 1204 Sgouros contrived to seize a considerable part of the country. The confusion following the fall of Constantinople gave him the excuse for attacking first Athens and then Thebes. The Athenians, led by their Metropolitan Michael Akominatos, refused to admit him and successfully fought him off. But Thebes surrendered, and Sgouros then advanced by way of Thermopylai to Larissa, where the Emperor Alexios III, fleeing before the Crusaders, had taken refuge. His enterprise and show of patriotism were rewarded with the hand of the Emperor's daughter in marriage; and for a brief hour he held undisputed sway over the greater part of the Theme of Hellas.⁸

The conquests of Leo Sgouros did not long survive the invasion of the Crusaders. Thessaly, Boiotia, and Attika were soon to pass under Latin rule. But the inhabitants of the Theme of Nikopolis in the north-west of Greece were destined to play a more conspicuous and lasting part in the defence and liberation of their country. In Epiros, secure behind the Pindos mountains, an independent state was to be organized which was to prove a constant menace to the Latins and a serious challenge to the imperial claims of the Kingdom of Nicaea.

Michael Angelos Komnenos Doukas, the founder of the Despotate of Epiros, was an illegitimate son of John Angelos Komnenos, the Sebastokrator, whose father Constantine Angelos had married Theodora Komnene, a daughter of Alexios I. He was also a first cousin of the Emperors Isaac II and Alexios III, the sons of his father's brother Andronikos. His father John had received the title of Sebastokrator from Isaac II, and had been appointed to command an army against the rebellion incited by Peter and John Asen in Bulgaria in 1186. He was so successful as a general that he fell under suspicion of conspiracy against the throne, and he was relieved of his command. His connexions with the powerful family of Branias aggravated the suspicions against him; but he was finally able to clear himself of the charge of treason. In the course of his career he is known also to have held office under the Empire as governor of the districts of Epiros and Thessaly with the title of Dux.

By his marriage to Zoe Doukaina, John Angelos had three sons, Theodore, Constantine, and Manuel, and one daughter, Anna. But the eldest of his children was his illegitimate son Michael. Michael's claim to relationship with the imperial families of Byzantium may be thought questionable. His Greek and Latin contemporaries called him only Michael or Michaelius, or at best 'Michael Comnanus'. But he himself did not hesitate to adopt the high-sounding title of Angelos-Komnenos-Doukas, which he considered to be his inheritance from his father and his brothers' mother.⁹ His connexions with the fortunes of Epiros, however, were better substantiated. His father's career as governor of Epiros and Thessaly had brought Michael into contact with the district over which he was himself to rule; and before the Latin conquest he had strengthened his hereditary interest there by marrying a cousin of the wife of Senacherim, then governor of the Theme of Nikopolis. This lady, whose name is not known, was related to the Emperor Alexios III, and was a daughter of the family of Melissenos, who owned large estates in northern Greece.¹⁰

Michael's career before 1204 is barely known. It is possible that he was among some hostages given to Frederick Barbarossa in 1190 by Isaac II, when the Third Crusade was on its way over the Dardanelles. But there is no certain evidence for his subse-

quent activities until the time that the Fourth Crusade arrived at Constantinople, when he was acting as governor of the Theme of the Peloponnese. In this capacity he was well placed either for the defence of southern Greece against the Crusaders or for the furtherance of his own interests in the general confusion. He chose the latter course, and made his way to Constantinople to offer his services to Boniface of Montferrat.¹¹

The Dowager Empress, Margaret of Hungary, whom Boniface had married, had many friends amongst the Greeks; and in his dispute with Baldwin over the possession of Thessalonike Boniface had been able to count on their support. Among them was Michael Angelos. Michael hoped perhaps to win some favour and influence with so powerful a rival of the Latin Emperor, or even to secure the succession to the Kingdom of Thessalonike for a son of the Empress Margaret, Manuel Angelos, to whom he was distantly related; and when in the autumn of 1204 Boniface set out from his new capital to conquer his dominions, Michael was one of his company. A number of other Greeks, who from somewhat similar motives had joined his cause, together with a varied crowd of Frankish, Lombard, and German knights and barons made up the army that marched down through Thessaly. Leo Sgouros, who had by then advanced as far as Larissa, soon withdrew before the invaders. Larissa, Lamia, Thermopylai, and Thebes were in turn occupied by the Latins; and Sgouros retreated to the rocky heights of the Akrocorinth to prepare the defence of his lawful possessions in the Argolid. Boniface continued his march to Athens, and even Michael Akominatos abandoned all hope of resistance. Athens and Thebes became the fief of a Burgundian knight, Otto de la Roche, who adopted the title of Duke of Athens. The Latin conquest of Hellas was complete, and the Crusaders settled down to dividing and organizing their territories according to feudal law.¹²

The part played by Michael Angelos in this expedition is obscure, but he must soon have realized that the sympathies of the new King of Thessalonike towards the Greeks did not extend to offering them a hand in the control and administration of their own country. When a better opportunity presented itself for serving his own interests and those of the Greeks, Michael had no scruples about deserting the cause of Boniface. Late in 1204

Senacherim, the governor of Nikopolis, found his authority threatened by a rebellion. Senacherim had ruled his province with a heavy hand, and his opponents chose the moment of the Latin conquest to put an end to his tyranny. He appealed for help to his relative Michael Angelos, who was then probably in Thessaly; and Michael, with or without the consent of Boniface, promptly made his way to Epiros. In the meantime Senacherim was murdered by the rebels, and Michael arrived to find the province in a state of anarchy. He used drastic measures to restore order. The murderers of the governor were put to death; while his widow was taken under Michael's protection, and shortly afterwards became his wife, or more canonically his mistress, since she was a near relation of his first wife.¹³

Michael stayed in Epiros only long enough to put down the revolt and to assert his authority as self-appointed governor. In the spring of 1205 he raised an army to fight the Crusaders in the Peloponnese, or the Morea as it now came to be called. The Latin conquest here was swift and met with little resistance. After capturing Athens the Lombard and Frankish army had marched south into the Argolid. Leo Sgouros, who had retreated to the Akrocorinth, held out stubbornly, and Boniface had pressed on to lay siege to the town of Nauplion, on the Gulf of Argos. Meanwhile another Frankish knight had arrived unexpectedly in the south-west of Greece. Geoffrey of Villehardouin, a nephew of the Chronicler of the Fourth Crusade, being on his way from Syria to Constantinople, had been blown off his course and forced to land on the shores of Messenia. There, helped by a local archon, he forced a number of Greek towns into submission. When the archon died, however, his more patriotic son turned against the Franks; and Villehardouin with his small company of soldiers had to fight his way north to Nauplion to ask for reinforcements from Boniface. Boniface received him with honour, and granted him the assistance of his compatriot and friend William of Champlitte, on the understanding that he should recognize Champlitte as his liege lord.

The towns of the Morea quickly collapsed before the combined army of these two knights. Patras, Andravida, and the whole of the western coast-line as far as the borders of Messenia were soon paying homage to the Franks. One last stand, however,

was made by the Greeks of Kyparissia or Arkadia; and it was in answer to a call for help from them, and to defend his rights as governor of the Theme of the Peloponnese, that Michael Angelos crossed over the Gulf of Corinth from Epiros. He brought with him an army of between four and six thousand infantry and cavalry, and marched south by way of Tripolis. Villehardouin and Champlite, who were then at Modon in southern Messenia, hurried north; and by the olive groves of Koundoura, near the village of Kapsikia, the one and only pitched battle in the Latin conquest of the Morea took place. The Greeks outnumbered the Franks by about ten to one, but they were beaten back by the charge of the knights and took to flight.

The battle of Koundoura set the seal of Frankish domination on the Morea. Kyparissia soon afterwards surrendered; and though Corinth, Nauplion, and Argos were still held by Leo Sgouros, and Lakedaimonia and the rock fortress of Monemvasia remained unconquered, the position of William of Champlite as 'Prince of all Achaia' was secure. Deprived of all but the title to his authority over the Morea, Michael Angelos returned to Epiros with the remnants of his army to defend the north-west of Greece against the invaders and lay the foundations of the Despotate of Epiros.¹⁴

Michael now set himself up as an autonomous ruler. With the victory of the Crusaders throughout the rest of Greece he found himself raised from the status of a mere adventurer to that of the last remaining champion of Hellenism on Greek soil. He had become protector of the traditions and defender of the faith of Byzantium. To emphasize his new dignity he adopted the title of Despot, which in the 'cursus honorum' of the Byzantine court ranked next to that of the Emperor himself. As the first cousin of two Emperors he could lay some claim to imperial rank. But his title had also at least the shadow of official sanction, for soon after his first arrival in Epiros Michael had received a royal visitor. The unfortunate Emperor Alexios III, driven from one refuge to another and abandoned in Thessaly by his son-in-law Leo Sgouros, had tried to reach safety in the mountains of Epiros. He had been waylaid and arrested by a band of Lombard knights that Boniface had sent in search of him, and he and his wife were taken to prison in Thessalonike. Michael no sooner heard of their plight

than he offered Boniface a large ransom for their release. Alexios and Euphrosyne were escorted to Salagora, the port of Arta, and on payment of the ransom were handed over to the care of their cousin Michael Angelos. In return for this service Alexios gave official recognition to the Despotate of Epiros, and confirmed it as the lawful property of Michael and his successors.

Alexios himself, hoping for the recovery of his capital and the restoration of the Empire, soon made his way to Asia Minor to seek the help of the Sultan of Konia. Michael gladly provided him with ships and sent his own brother Constantine Angelos as escort. The Sultan, who had formerly sought Alexios' help in similar circumstances, received him kindly, and was glad of his support against Theodore Laskaris of Nicaea. But in 1210 they were both defeated by Theodore near Antioch. Alexios was captured and ended his days in a monastery. The Empress Euphrosyne, who had stayed in Epiros with Michael, died at Arta some years later.¹⁵

The ratification of Michael's authority by the Emperor Alexios III must have carried some weight among the nobility of Epiros. During his short reign Alexios had granted benefices, monastic properties, and gifts of land to his relatives and favourites with a lavish hand in the Theme of Nikopolis. It had become as it were an 'aristocratic colony', parcelled out among members of the imperial family, the court, and the Church.¹⁶ The great family of Melissenos, with which Michael was connected by marriage, had estates in Epiros as well as Thessaly; and Michael himself, being the Emperor's cousin, had doubtless received his share of imperial favour in the district in time past. With the Emperor's personal commendation, therefore, and with the Empress Euphrosyne in residence at Arta, he could command respect in his position as Despot of Epiros.¹⁷ In Asia Minor the authority of Theodore Laskaris, who had set himself up as Despot at Nicaea, was constantly threatened by rivals, some of whom, such as Theodore Mangaphas in Philadelphia, made more than one attempt to assert their independence. But Michael seems to have established his supremacy in Epiros without opposition.

The native Epirotes, if not the immigrant landed gentry, were a warlike people. They had already experienced the consequences of invasion by a foreign army when the Normans came

over from Sicily, and they gave themselves readily to the task of defending their country against the Crusaders and the Venetians. The population of Epiros was greatly increased by the stream of refugees from the capital and from parts of the Empire occupied by the Latins. Demetrios Chomatenos, the later Archbishop of Ochrida, estimated that at least half if not the greater number of the refugees from Constantinople in 1204 and after found their way to Epiros. A colony of refugees was settled in Ioannina by Michael, much to the disgust of the inhabitants; and large numbers of Greeks came across into Aitolia from the Morea, many of them members of the aristocracy.¹⁸

The refugees no less than the natives were eager to save Epiros from the Latins, and Michael had no difficulty in finding soldiers to protect the frontiers of the Despotate. But as his authority became more firmly established he was able to increase his army by attracting to his service many of the underpaid soldiers of the Crusader knights and barons; and the Venetians shamelessly shipped over the Adriatic numbers of mercenaries recruited in Italy to fight for the Greeks against the Franks.¹⁹

By 1205 Michael's authority as successor to Senacherim was acknowledged over the part of north-western Greece known as Old Epiros, from Arta and the Ambracian Gulf at least as far north as the Akrokeraunian promontory, and from Vonitzia through Akarnania and Aitolia as far south as Naupaktos. The geographical nature of Epiros marks it out as a district eminently suitable for the maintenance of an independent state. Michael was, as Gregoras observes, 'far removed from the centre of affairs and confident in the natural strength of his own country'.²⁰ For purposes of administration and defence the most important towns in the Despotate were Naupaktos, Arta, and Ioannina. Naupaktos was a strong natural harbour near the narrowest point of the Corinthian Gulf, from which the coast of Aitolia could be guarded and the south-eastern boundary of the Despotate protected against the neighbouring Frankish Barony that had been established at Salona or Amphissa. Arta, Michael's capital, situated on a wide and well-watered plain at the head of the Ambracian Gulf, almost encircled by a ring of mountains, was connected by a road over Pindos with Trikkala and Thessaly, and by sea and road, by way of Naupaktos, with the Morea.

Ioannina, the centre of administration in the north, was connected by road with Arta and with Thessaly, and lay on the direct route north to Albania.

Here, to the north of Michael's province, the chieftains of Elbassan or Albanon had no cause to resent the establishment of the Despotate. To them Michael was merely another Byzantine governor of the Theme of Nikopolis, and they were prepared to co-operate with him, especially as he befriended them and encouraged them to attack his enemies. The Albanian chieftain who controlled the country round Elbassan and the fortress of Kroia to the north-east of Durazzo at the time of the Fourth Crusade was called Ghin, son of Progonos; and he proved a useful ally of the Despotate against the encroachments of the Venetians in northern Epiros.²¹ Still further north lay the now independent Kingdom of Serbia, ruled over by the second Stephen Nemanja, the son of its founder. Michael had apparently no diplomatic relations with the Serbians; but he came to an agreement of some kind with the flourishing emporium of Ragusa on the Adriatic coast, which after an unsuccessful attempt at rebellion in 1204, had once again submitted to the rule of Venice.²²

In the early years of its history the Despotate was little troubled by the Crusaders. The Lombards of the Kingdom of Thessalonike and Thessaly, and the Franks of Athens and the Morea were too busy consolidating their own conquests and fighting more troublesome enemies; and the Pindos mountains effectively separated them from the north-west of Greece. Nor had they any real claim to suzerainty over Epiros and Albania. By right of the Partition Treaty of October 1204 the possession of most of the Epirote and Albanian coast-line and islands, as well as a number of places in the interior, had been granted to Venice. In particular the Venetians claimed Durazzo and Elbassan, Ioannina, Corfu, Cephalonia, Zante, and Leukas, Nikopolis and the territory of Arta, and Acheloos and Anatoliko in Aitolia. It was the Venetians rather than the Crusaders who were Michael's most dangerous enemies.²³

Venetian merchants had long been familiar with the ports of Epiros and the Ionian islands. As late as 1198 they had been granted extensive commercial privileges throughout the north-west of Greece by Alexios III. The Venetians were therefore

determined to substantiate their claims to the key positions without delay; and in the spring of 1205 a fleet from Venice, which was escorting Thomas Morosini, the first Latin Patriarch, to Constantinople, attacked Durazzo and Corfu. The citizens of Durazzo had paid homage to the young Alexios when he was on his way from Zara to the east with the Fourth Crusade. But they had not since recognised the authority over them of Michael Angelos. The town of Corfu had again been seized by the Genoese adventurer, Leone Vetrano, and neither he nor the islanders were ready to submit to Venetian occupation. The admiral of the Venetian fleet, Jacopo Morosini, met with stubborn resistance. Durazzo finally surrendered in June 1205. But the capture of Corfu proved more difficult. Vetrano was driven off; but Morosini was only able to establish a precarious hold on the island before proceeding on his voyage.²⁴

The Venetian threat to the Despotate, however, was not as serious as it might have seemed; and it was considerably minimized a few months later. Durazzo and Corfu had been captured in the name of the 'Podestà' of the Venetians in the Latin Empire; and it was assumed that any further acquisitions in Epiros would likewise be dependent upon Constantinople, according to the terms of the Partition Treaty. But the new Doge of Venice, Pietro Ziani, thought otherwise. The link between Venice and her colony in Constantinople had been weakened when the Doge, Henry Dandolo, died in May 1205. It was essential that that colony should be managed in the interests of Venice rather than of the colonists or the Latin Empire. This principle was quickly enforced by Pietro Ziani, who was elected Doge in August. At his command, in October of the same year, Marino Zeno, Dandolo's nephew and Podestà of the Venetians in 'Romania', formally ceded to the direct control of Venice not only Durazzo and Corfu, but also a large part of the still unconquered territory in Epiros which the Venetians claimed under the Partition Treaty, including the chartolarate of Glavinitza, the province of Vagenezia, the district of Sfenarsa, Avlona, and the river port of Glyki. The Epirote coast, together with Corfu, thus became directly dependent upon Venice 'to do with as she pleased'. They ceased to be a part of the Latin Empire, and so ceased to be under the jurisdiction of the Latin Emperor or a possible object of conquest

in his name. This arrangement was of no little benefit to the Despotate, and before long Michael was able to come to terms with Venice in a manner convenient to the Doge and to himself.²⁵

In Durazzo a Venetian governor, Marino Valaresso, was installed in 1205, and a Latin Archbishop was appointed soon after. Corfu, however, proved less submissive. Morosini had barely left when the Corfiotes were up in arms against their Venetian garrison. Vetrano reappeared and received a warm welcome from the inhabitants. A punitive expedition was sent out from Venice in the spring of 1206. The castle put up a strong defence but was taken by escalade. Vetrano fled but was captured on the high seas. He was brought back to Corfu and there executed with sixty of his accomplices as an example to other would-be rebels. The castle was refortified and a governor appointed; but Venice soon realized that her other commitments would not allow her to maintain direct control over so uncertain a colony. In July 1207 Corfu and its adjacent islands were transferred to the care of ten Venetian nobles and their heirs, on condition that they maintained its defences and paid the Republic an annuity of five hundred gold pieces (manolata). Special concessions were awarded to Venetian traders in the island, and care was to be taken to protect the rights of the Greeks and the Greek Church so long as they remained loyal to Venice.²⁶

The islands of Cephalonia, Ithaka, and Zante, though nominally a part of the Venetian share in the Latin Empire, remained under the control of Count Maio Orsini. But after the Venetian occupation of Corfu, Orsini, who had actively supported the rebel Vetrano, cautiously put his islands under the protection of Pope Innocent III. In 1207 he humbly expressed his desire to abandon the life of piracy and to live in harmony with his neighbours, and asked for the confirmation of a Roman bishop in Cephalonia. He was obliged none the less to accept the suzerainty of Venice over his property, and two years later he swore an oath of perpetual fidelity to the Republic. The situation in the island of Leukas is less certain, though it seems likely that it formed part of the Despotate of Epiros from the beginning. Its geographical position at the entrance to the Ambracian Gulf suggests that Michael, who already held the strong fortress of Vonitza nearby

and the whole of the Akarnanian coast opposite, could scarcely have let it pass out of his hands.²⁷

Michael's relationships with his neighbours in Thessaly and Macedonia were made easier by their own hostility towards the Latins. The Vlachs or Wallachians of Thessaly, who formed part of the Bulgarian Empire, were as much enemies of the Crusaders as Michael himself; and while they could scarcely be reckoned as allies, they could be counted upon as a serious pre-occupation for the invaders. In Bulgaria itself the Greeks found an unexpected ally against the Latin Empire. Kalojan, the brother of Peter and John Asen, had succeeded to the Bulgarian throne in 1197. His ferocious campaigns against the Greeks of Macedonia and Thrace before 1204 had earned for him the title of 'Romaiktonos', and he regarded the arrival of the Crusaders as providential. He had recently obtained Papal recognition of his Kingdom, and he had good reason to hope that he would be received into equal alliance with the Latin Emperor of Constantinople. But the Emperor Baldwin knew little of Bulgarian ambitions and still less of diplomatic tact. When Kalojan generously offered his help in defeating the Greeks he was rudely refused. This unstatesmanlike blunder deprived the Crusaders of a powerful supporter. Kalojan turned from massacring the Thracians and Macedonians to inciting them against the common enemy in Constantinople and Thessalonike. From being the assassin of the Greeks he proposed to become their saviour. The dream of capturing Constantinople and founding a Byzantino-Bulgarian Orthodox Empire began to haunt the mind of Kalojan and his successors as it had of their predecessor Symeon three hundred years before.²⁸

Such was the result of Baldwin's miscalculation; and the first to suffer from its effects was Baldwin himself. Kalojan attacked Adrianople early in 1205. The Crusaders suffered heavy casualties and a severe defeat; but Baldwin was captured and lost to history. His successor Henry of Flanders managed to recover Adrianople. But in 1207 Boniface of Montferrat, who had hurried to the defence of his Kingdom of Thessalonike, was also killed in a skirmish with a Bulgarian army. Thus, within the space of three years, Kalojan accounted for the removal of the rulers of both Constantinople and Thessalonike, and rendered an inestimable

service to the Greek cause. His defeat of Baldwin in 1205 gave a breathing-space to Theodore Laskaris in Asia Minor. When the Crusader armies were withdrawn from Bithynia to fight in Thrace, Laskaris established a new capital at Nicaea, and early in 1206 he adopted the title and the crown of 'Emperor of the Romans'. In the eyes of the eastern Greeks Nicaea became thenceforth the seat of the Byzantine Empire and the Byzantine Church in exile. The death of Boniface of Montferrat in 1207 similarly affected the fortunes of the Despotate of Epiros. It permanently weakened the Kingdom of Thessalonike, and led to a rift between the conquerors of Greece that greatly facilitated Michael's task.

Henry Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, died in 1205 as a result of his exertions in the Adrianople campaign; and the Latin Empire was barely founded before it lost the three leaders who had been its main inspiration. It was saved by the skill and energy of its new Emperor, Henry of Flanders, and by the timely death of Kalojan of Bulgaria, struck down by the sword of St. Demetrios during an attack on the city of Thessalonike in 1207.²⁹

¹ Villehardouin, *ed.* Faral, II, pp. 34-6, §§ 234-5. Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden Venedig*, I, pp. 444-52.

² Villehardouin, II, pp. 62-4, §§ 257-8.

³ Villehardouin, II, pp. 70-2, §§ 264-5.

⁴ Niketas Choniates, *ed.* Bonn, 792-4. Villehardouin, II, pp. 80-106, §§ 272-99, 301. Robert of Clari, *ed.* Lauer, 102-5, 110, 115. J. Longnon, *l'Empire latin de Constantinople*, pp. 58-61.

⁵ Partition Treaty in Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, I, pp. 468-88. See Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 61-2.

⁶ For the Kingdom of Nicaea, see A. Gardner, *The Lascaris of Nicaea* (London 1912). For the Empire of Trebizond, see W. Miller, *Trebizond, the Last Greek Empire* (London 1926).

⁷ Villehardouin, I, p. 116, § 113. Dandolo (*R.I.S. XII*), 336. Benedict of Peterborough, *Gesta Regis Ricardi*, *ed.* W. Stubbs, vol. II, p. 199. The Aragonese Chronicle of the Morea, *ed.* Morel-Fatio, 236-9, says that Maio was exiled from Monopoli and married the daughter of a Greek governor of Cephalonia. See N. A. Bees, in *Byz-neugr. Jahrbuch.*, III (1922), pp. 167-9; Romanos, *Γρατιανὸς Ζώρζης*, pp. 121-2.

⁸ Niketas 799-807. Akropolites, *ed.* Heisenberg, 13-14. Villehardouin, II, 108, § 301; 116-18, § 309. Michael Akominatos, *ed.* Lambros, II, pp. 162-87. See W. Miller, *Latin in the Levant*, pp. 31-2.

⁹ As a general rule the Despots of Epiros, though more nearly related to the Angelos family, preferred to call themselves by the older and perhaps more respectable names of Komnenos and Doukas.

¹⁰ Niketas 126, 489, 502, 841. Akropolites 13-14. Villehardouin, II, 108-10, § 301. Job Monachus, *Life of St. Theodora of Arta*, *ed.* Mustoxidi (*Hellenomnenon* 1843), p. 42; *ed.* Migne, *P.G.*, vol. 127, pp. 903-4; *ed.* J. A. Buchon, *Nouvelles Recherches*, II, p. 402. Buchon (*loc. cit.*) suggests that Michael's first wife was a daughter of Alexios Melissenos.

Grand Duke under Manuel I. A fourth son of John Sebastokrator, Isaac, who married a daughter of Alexios Branas, was perhaps a child of a previous marriage. He died fighting in the defence of Constantinople in 1203.

¹¹ Villehardouin, *loc. cit.* Job, *loc. cit.* *Gesta Friderici Imperatoris* (M.G.H. XVIII), 379. Meliarakes, 'Ιστορία τοῦ Βασιλέων Νικατάσ', p. 49, and Gardner, *Lascaris*, p. 89, identify Michael with the Michael Komnenos who, as Byzantine governor in the Meander valley in 1195, rebelled against Alexios III and deserted to the Sultan of Konia. (See Niketas 700-1, and documents in Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca medii Aevi*, IV, pp. 319, 321, 323.) But the later relationships between Michael of Epiros and Alexios III make this extremely improbable. Niketas seems to have confused two Michaels, each the bastard son of a different John Komnenos. See G. Ostrogorsky, *The rise of the Angelos family, Jubileinyi Sbornik Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obschestva* (Belgrade 1936), pp. 111-29; P. Wittek, *L'Epitaphe d'un Conné de Konya, Byzantion*, X (1935), p. 512, and XII (1937), pp. 209-11.

¹² Niketas 799-807. Villehardouin, II, 108-10, § 301. Michael Akominatos, *ed.* Lambros, II, pp. 162-87. Chronicle of the Morea, *ed.* P. Kalonares, lines 1555-7.

¹³ Job, *op. cit.* *ed.* Mustoxidi, 42-3; *ed.* Buchon, 401-2; *ed.* Migne, 903-4. Villehardouin, *loc. cit.* The Serbian account (supported by Alberic of Trois Fontaines (M.G.H. XXIII), 886) is that Michael first raised his standard in the region of Durazzo, and conquered Skodra, then in the Serbian Kingdom of Stephen Nemanja. DuCange, *Histoire de Constantinople*, p. 124, accepts this version, and says that Michael's second wife was the daughter of the Greek governor of Durazzo. But Villehardouin and Job are more convincing, though the former states that Michael married the daughter and not the widow of the governor. The capture of Skodra should be dated to a later stage. See below, p. 38.

¹⁴ Villehardouin, II, 132-42, §§ 324-32. Chronicle of the Morea 1505-1738. *Livre de la Conquête*, *ed.* Longnon, 103-17. Kapsikia is the modern Kapsiá, between Tripolis and Levidi.

¹⁵ Akropolites 13, 17. Ephraim, *ed.* Bonn, lines 7557-631. Job, *ed.* Mustoxidi, 50; *ed.* Buchon, 402; *ed.* Migne, 903-4. Villehardouin 309. John Apokaukos, *ed.* P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Statej Posyjasennych V.N. Lamanskemu*, Part I (St. Petersburg 1907), no. 6, p. 243. Niketas (819) says that Alexios and Euphrosyne were sent to Germany as prisoners. For the various traditions of the Emperor's fate, see Farel's edition of Villehardouin, p. 117, note 5.

¹⁶ See V. Laurent, *Charisticariat et Commende à Byzance*, *Revue des Etudes byzantines*, XII (1954), pp. 106-7. Alexios III's chrysobull to the Venetians in 1198 refers especially to 'Provincia Nicopolon . . . cum ipsis episkopibus subiacentibus intimis consanguinibus imperii mei, semper felicissimis sebastocratoribus, cesaribus et dilectis imperii mei filiabus ac desideratissime ipsi mee Auguste'. (Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, I, 264.)

¹⁷ Constantine Melissenos, whose estates were in the region of Volos, took refuge in Epiros in 1205. See below, p. 37.

¹⁸ Chomatenos 490 and 93-4 (λαὸν γὰρ οὐκ εὐάριθμον οὐ τοῦ Πέλοπος τῇ ἡμετέρᾳ ἀλλῇ παρεπέμφατο). For the refugees in Ioannina, see below, p. 42.

¹⁹ See Letters of Innocent III, xiii, 184 (dated 1210); and a document of 1212, published by R. Morozzo de la Rocca and A. Lombardos, *Documenti del Commercio Veneziano nei secoli XI-XIII*, in *Documenti e Studi per la Storia del Commercio e del Diritto Commerciale Italiano*, (Turin 1940), vol. II, no. 544, p. 86.

²⁰ Nikephoros Gregoras, *ed.* Bonn, I, 13.

²¹ For the Albanians, see Drinov in *Vizantiski Vremmenik*, I (1894), pp. 321-2; Jircéek and Thalloczy in *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, 21 (1896), p. 87. See also Genealogical Table below, p. 237. Progonos may either be the real name of Ghin's father or merely a generic term for an ancestor.

²² Sanudo (R.I.S. XXII), 534. The argyrobull of Michael Doukas dated June, indiction 9, ascribed to Michael I by Miklosich and Müller (III, 58) and others, clearly belongs to Michael II, and should be dated to 1266 (or 1251) not 1206. See M. Markovic, *Byzantine Sources in the Archives of Dubrovnik, Sbornik Radova* (XXI),

Vizantoloski Institut, I (Belgrade 1952), pp. 260-1; and see below, p. 193. But Michael II, in both of his decrees to the Ragusans, refers in general terms to his father's dealings with them. See also P. Lemerle, in 'Ελληνικά, 4 (Thessalonike 1953), p. 413, note 28.

²³ Tafel and Thomas, I, pp. 468-73.

²⁴ Villehardouin, I, 112-14, § 111. Durazzo was still Greek in July 1204, when the authorities there refused to grant a passage to Italy to the Archbishop of Tirnovo. See his letter to the Pope in Theiner, *Vetora Monumenta Slavorum*, I, p. 28, no. 44.

²⁵ Tafel and Thomas, I, 569-71. Thalloczy, Jircéek, and Sufflay, *Acta et Diplomata Albaniae*, I, no. 130, p. 42. R. L. Wolff, A new document from the period of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, the Oath of the Venetian Podestà, *Mélanges Henri Grégoire*, IV (1953), pp. 539-73 (especially pp. 544-9). Glavinitza was in the region of the Akrokeramian promontory. Vagenetia was the name given to the coastal district opposite Corfu. Glyky was near the modern Paramythia (Aidonati), on the river Acheron. Slenarsa was the district round the estuary of the Voussa river to the north of Avlona. See below, Appendix on the Topography of the Despotate and Map.

²⁶ Martin da Canal, *La Chronique des Venetiens*, *ed.* Galvani, 346, 348, 720. Dandolo (R.I.S. XII), 335. Sanudo, *Vitae Duxum Venetorum* (R.I.S. XXIII), 534-5. Laurentius de Monacis, *Chronicon de rebus Venetis*, Book VIII, p. 143. A. Mustoxidi, *Delle Cose Coreresi*, pp. 398-9, and Appendix, pp. vi-viii.

²⁷ Letters of Innocent III, x, 33, 127. Dandolo 336. At least by 1212 Leukas is known to have had a Greek bishop appointed by Michael. The Greek Bishop of Zante seems to have sponsored a patriotic movement and refused to acknowledge obedience to the Roman Church. Letters of Innocent III, x, 128 (October 1207).

²⁸ Kalojan is known as Joannitius to the western chroniclers. For the Byzantine-Bulgarian alliance of 1204-05, and the part played in it by John Kamateros, the ex-Patriarch of Constantinople, who had settled in Thrace, see A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 509, and G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, (Oxford 1956), p. 379.

²⁹ Niketas 813-14. Akropolites 18-19, 23. Ephraim 7818-24. Chronicle of the Morea 1051-1167. Villehardouin, II, 160-70, §§ 352-61; 196-208, §§ 388-98; 308-14, §§ 495-500. Robert of Clari 112, 116. Ernoul, *ed.* Mas Latrie, 390. Alberic of Trois Fontaines (M.G.H. XXIII), 885-6. Theiner, *Vetora Monumenta Slavorum*, I, 20-8, 39, 40. Jircéek, *Bulgaren*, pp. 233-8. Gardner, *Lascaris*, p. 68. Vasiliev, *History*, pp. 509-11.

CHAPTER 2

MICHAEL I ANGELOS

1206-15

MICHAEL's expedition to the Morea in 1205 had been his last attempt to assert his claim to the title of governor of the Theme of the Peloponnese. Associated with him in this enterprise was his half-brother, Theodore Angelos; and it was to him that Michael ultimately entrusted the defence of his last possessions in the Morea. This brother, who was to play so important a part in the enlargement of the Despotate in later years, had come on Michael's invitation from Asia Minor, where he had been engaged since the fall of Constantinople in fighting the enemies and laying the foundations of the Kingdom of Nicaea. By 1205 the issues were not sufficiently clear for there to be any serious rivalry between Nicaea and Epiros. Theodore Laskaris was still struggling to establish his authority, and had not yet adopted the title of Emperor. Michael's request that his brother should join him in Greece was therefore granted; but Laskaris took the precaution of demanding an oath of fidelity from Theodore to himself and his successors at Nicaea.¹

Michael's object in bringing Theodore to Greece may have been partly to ensure that the Despotate should not be without a competent successor in the event of his own death. His other half-brothers, Constantine and Manuel, he considered unfit to rule. It is supposed that Michael had no legitimate offspring, and that his half-brothers were the only possible heirs to his title and property. But apart from his three daughters he had one son called Constantine, whom he at any rate considered to be his legitimate heir. He is mentioned only once, in the text of his father's treaty with Venice in 1210. But at that time he was quite evidently regarded as the successor to the Despotate, being enjoined to observe the clauses of the treaty after Michael's death. It seems therefore more probable that Michael asked for Theo-

dore's help merely as a capable soldier, which his other brothers were not.²

Whatever his motives Michael finally saddled his brother with a task that proved to be beyond even his military prowess. After the battle of Koundoura Theodore Angelos was left in the Morea to help in the defence of the fortresses of Argos, Nauplion, and Corinth, where Leo Sgouros was still maintaining a desperate resistance against the Franks. The Akrocorinth was under continuous siege from the army of William of Champlite for three years; and when Sgouros in final despair flung himself to death from its rock in 1208 his possessions passed to Theodore. Michael became heir to the title of 'Lord of Corinth', and left it to his brother to substantiate the claim.³

In 1209 William of Champlite returned to France, leaving as his baillie in the Morea Geoffrey of Villehardouin. Villehardouin used his temporary authority to his own advantage and successfully thwarted the claims of Champlite's cousin Robert who was sent to supersede him. In 1210 he was acclaimed by his own followers and recognised by the Pope as 'Prince of Achaia'. In the same year, assisted by Otto de la Roche, the Duke of Athens, he resumed the siege of Corinth; and before their combined assault the citadel at last surrendered. Michael was at this time engaged in the north of Greece, but it seems unlikely that he had any intention of sending an army to support his brother. It was better simply to admit the loss of the title and property bequeathed to him by Sgouros. Theodore managed to escape when the Franks entered Corinth, carrying with him the treasures of the Corinthian church, and made for Argos. Villehardouin meanwhile attacked Nauplion, which he was able to capture with the help of a Venetian fleet; and early in 1212 he marched against Argos. Theodore took to flight. The treasures of the church of Corinth, which he left behind in the citadel of Argos, were divided among the conquerors, an act that earned them a strong rebuke from the Pope. Again Theodore contrived to elude capture, and somehow made his way to Epiros to join his brother. Monemvasia now remained the only centre of Greek resistance in the Morea, and the territorial claims of the Despots of Epiros never again extended south of the Gulf of Corinth.⁴

Michael had meanwhile been employing diplomatic measures to strengthen his position with regard to his powerful neighbours. With the Venetians established in Corfu and Durazzo and the Crusaders in Thessaly and Thessalonike the Despotate was hemmed in by enemies to east and west. To disarm their suspicions and to play for time Michael decided to enter into negotiations with all parties. As a preliminary safeguard against both Venice and the Latin Empire he followed the example of Maio Orsini and professed submission to the Pope, putting his territory under the protection of the Holy See. It was a useful form of insurance against attack from either side, but nothing more. The promises and treaties that Michael found it expedient to make with Italians and Franks alike were never more than breathing-spaces in his campaigns against them, solemnly made and simply broken.

In his dealings with Venice Michael was in close alliance with the Albanian prince of Kroia and Elbassan. The possession of these fortresses had passed from Ghin to his brother Demetrios in 1207. Demetrios was connected with the royal family of Serbia by his marriage to a daughter of Stephen II Nemanja and Eudokia, and his interests were divided between Epiros and Serbia. Perhaps following Michael's policy he made a commercial treaty with Ragusa, granting its citizens free access to his territory, and styling himself 'Dei gratia panhypersebastos et magnus archon'; and early in 1208 he asked for a Papal legate to be sent to his court to instruct him in the Roman faith. By these means he no doubt hoped, like Michael, to safeguard himself against the encroachments of the Venetians.⁵

Both Michael and Demetrios, however, soon found it more profitable to come to terms with the Venetians in Albania, and some kind of agreement must have been worked out between them by the latter part of 1208. Venice had high hopes for her new colony in Durazzo which she had already dignified with the title of a Duchy. When the Archbishop of Durazzo died in 1208 the Venetian governor appropriated for his own use the revenues and estates that belonged to the church. Michael and Demetrios were allowed to seize such of the ecclesiastical property of Durazzo as they could lay their hands on, to be held presumably under suzerainty to Venice. A new Archbishop, Manfred, ordained by

the Pope and confirmed by the Patriarch of Constantinople, was appointed in 1209; but the Venetian governor refused to grant him access to Durazzo and insisted on the appointment of an Archbishop from Venice. The Pope made strong representations to the Doge, and Manfred was finally permitted to enter his diocese on certain conditions. At the same time the Pope wrote letters to Michael and Demetrios ordering them to restore to the church of Durazzo the property that they had seized. Demetrios was threatened with excommunication even before his conversion was complete, and Michael was warned that those who professed themselves servants of the Pope should treat his church with reverence and not with violence.⁶

Whether the Pope's order was obeyed is not known, but for the time being Michael chose to accept as an accomplished fact the Venetian colonization of Durazzo and Corfu. In the summer of 1209 a danger of a much more immediate nature to the Despotate came from the Kingdom of Thessalonike on the east. When Boniface of Montferrat was killed in 1207 the throne of Thessalonike had passed to his infant son, Demetrios, under the protection of his mother Margaret of Hungary, and the suzerainty of the Emperor Henry. But the real power in the Kingdom lay in the hands of the Lombard barons who owed their position to Boniface and refused to acknowledge allegiance to Henry. They claimed that the succession belonged by right not to Demetrios but to his half-brother, William of Montferrat. Chief among them was Count Hubert of Biandrate, who, with the support of William, the Baron of Larissa, Guy Pelavicino, the Marquis of Boudonitza, and other Lombard knights who had established themselves in Thessaly, asserted the independence of Thessalonike from the Latin Empire, and invited William of Montferrat to come over from Italy. They claimed in his name 'all the land from Durazzo to Megara, the whole isle of Greece, and the suzerainty over Michael and all his barons in Epiros'.⁷

The Emperor Henry acted promptly to suppress this rebellion against his authority. In the winter of 1208 he marched on Thessalonike, outmanoeuvred Count Hubert, and crowned the young Demetrios himself. Then, early in 1209, he pursued the remaining rebels south to Larissa. William of Larissa was defeated but allowed to retain his castle. The Marquis of Boudonitza, how-

ever, and other barons refused either to surrender or to negotiate, and barricaded themselves in the citadel of Thebes. There they were besieged and forced to surrender in May 1209. The rebellion was over, and Henry led his army in triumph to Athens and Euboea before making his way back to Thessalonike.⁸

The Kingdom of Thessalonike was now more securely united to the Latin Empire than ever before. The barons of the Kingdom had already claimed the right to exercise authority over Epiros; and the largest Frankish army yet seen in Greece might easily be turned to substantiating that claim. Michael of Epiros suited his actions to the occasion. The Emperor Henry was in a strong position to make war against a neighbour whom he regarded with the greatest mistrust. As subsequent events proved, Michael had no further object in mind than to obviate this imminent danger. To ensure the peaceful withdrawal of Henry's troops from Greece he was prepared to make almost any concessions that might seem convenient. It is remarkable that the Emperor, for all his conviction of Michael's treacherous character, was beguiled into accepting his proposals.

In the summer of 1209, when Henry was in the country to the south of Thessalonike, an embassy from Epiros arrived at his camp. The description of the negotiations that took place is given only by Henry of Valenciennes, and appears to be an eye-witness account. When the ambassadors were announced Henry summoned his counsellors Conon of Béthune and Peter of Douai and held a conference. Michael, he told them, was reputed to be 'wondrous treacherous and false' and his speech keen and crafty. The gifts that he had sent could never be accepted by a man of honour. Michael had offered to come to terms with the Emperor. He must be told that the Emperor would consider his offer only on one condition, that all his dominions should be held as a fief under the Latin Empire. If the Despot consented to this condition he would be considered on an equal footing with the Emperor's own brother. Otherwise let him prepare for invasion by the whole imperial army.

This was the message that Henry's two counsellors were instructed to deliver to Michael. They found him staying in a monastery not far away, presented their credentials and were asked to state their terms. They then outlined the Emperor's

proposition. Their speech was delivered with such refinement, dignity, and moderation that all their audience and even the Despot himself were eager to win the friendship of the Franks; and their courteous address and manner 'softened a little the heart of Michael'.

Michael may have risen to the occasion in such a display of chivalrous good manners, but the softness of his heart did not impair the resourcefulness of his mind. In his reply he artfully evaded the issue and took the sting out of Henry's threats and conditions. He proposed that his eldest daughter should marry the Emperor's brother, Eustace of Flanders. On the basis of such a relationship peace and mutual understanding would, he declared, be assured. With the hand of his daughter he promised as dowry a third part of his territory; and, as a final gesture, he told the Frankish ambassadors to make it known to their Emperor that he was the best equipped in 'all Romania' to render service by land and sea in the imperial cause.⁹

With these promises and assurances Michael succeeded in thwarting Henry's original intention; and Henry, despite his avowed mistrust of Michael, blindly entered into an alliance that gave him no real jurisdiction over the Despotate and only a shadow of a claim to one third of all the land which he had threatened to appropriate. A treaty was drawn up, and shortly afterwards the marriage took place between Eustace and Michael's daughter.

The immediate threat to the Despotate had been diplomatically averted. But the Kingdom of Thessalonike lay at the mercy of its most treacherous enemy. Henry led his army back to Constantinople, leaving the barons of Thessaly to manage their own affairs; and he appointed as defenders of their capital Michael's new son-in-law, Eustace of Flanders, and a German knight, Berthold of Katzenellenbogen, who had been Count of Velestino in Thessaly. Eustace and Berthold were to act as guardians and regents to the infant King Demetrios.

Any hopes that Henry may have had of enforcing his authority over the Despotate were soon deceived. Michael had little intention of keeping his word but still less of acknowledging the suzerainty of the Latin Empire over any part of his dominions. Scarcely had the Emperor left Greece when the situation was

changed by the intervention of Venice. Michael had already had dealings with the Venetian governor of Durazzo, and it may have been through his agency that the Doge himself now proposed terms for the peaceful settlement of Venetian claims in Albania and Epiros. Since 1205 the burden of substantiating those claims had been transferred from the Venetians in Constantinople to the Venetians in Italy, but only Corfu and Durazzo had so far been conquered. As a general rule it was against the policy of the Venetians to go to the trouble and expense of conquest and occupation in foreign countries. Territory could be controlled either by alienating it to rulers of their own choice, as in the case of Corfu, or by persuading the existing rulers to become their vassals. With Michael Angelos established as Despot of Epiros an arrangement might be made whereby he would govern his country in the name and in the interests of Venice. The treaty that Michael had just made with the Emperor Henry was clearly against the interest of Venice. That even one third of the Despotate should be under suzerainty to the Latin Empire was a contradiction of the terms of the original Partition Treaty and of the agreement between the Podestà and the Doge. The Venetians therefore had no scruples about entering into negotiations of their own with Michael in order to safeguard their claims in Epiros. If the Despot of Epiros would consent to become their vassal then the situation would be restored in their favour.

From Michael's point of view such an arrangement had much to commend it. The Venetians, whose merchants were familiar figures in Epiros, cannot have been regarded with the same hostility as the intruding Franks. To make the pretence of holding his territory as a fief from Venice would prevent the Despotate from becoming a battle-ground, and compromise the claims of the Latin Emperor; and to allow the Venetians freedom of access to markets in which they had long been established would help the prosperity of the Despotate. An agreement was therefore drawn up between 'Michael Comnarus Dux' and the Doge, Pietro Ziani, to the satisfaction and benefit of both. It was signed on 20 June 1210.¹⁰

Michael swore to be faithful to St. Mark and to the Doge and his successors, and confirmed each item of the contract by golden bull. He acknowledged the concession by Venice to himself and

his heirs 'nomine feudi' of all his territory, stretching from the river Vrecus,¹¹ which is below the Duchy of Durazzo, down to Nepantum,¹² including the Duchy of Nicopolis, with the adjacent lands of Larta (Arta), Achilo (Achelous), and Natoliko,¹³ together with Talisiana¹⁴ and other important estates and properties; the province of Ioannina, Grandis,¹⁵ the provinces of Vagenezia, Istronopolis,¹⁶ Colloneia, and the chartolarate of Glaverica.¹⁷ Throughout this district he promised to ensure the safety and security of all Venetians and citizens of Durazzo, and to defend their right to trade wherever they wished without tax or import duty. He granted them permission to have their own premises, churches, and senate houses in any part of his domains, and confirmed all the privileges that they had enjoyed under the Emperor Manuel. Venetians were to trade freely in Durazzo, to have access to all rivers and ports, and to travel by land without payment of any toll. For any offence or hurt offered to a Venetian or citizen of Durazzo or Corfu by an Epirote Michael promised to give satisfaction within fifteen days, or failing that to make double amends. The enemies of Venice should be his enemies and refused entry into his country; and should the Albanians or the Corfiotes show any disinclination to submit to the authority of Venice he would side with the Venetians against them. The export of corn from Epiros to Venice was to be freely permitted and in the event of the wreck of a Venetian ship off the shores of Epiros, every assistance would be given towards the recovery of the cargo. Finally Michael promised to pay to a Venetian ambassador in Durazzo, or to the governor of that town, or to some other delegate a yearly sum of forty-two pounds of hyperpera or the equivalent, half in May and half in September, and to present one gold-ornamented altar-cloth to St. Mark's and one to the Doge. To these clauses he added the oath of his 'baillies', and declared himself bound by the bonds of fidelity to St. Mark to ensure that his pledges should be honoured in his own lifetime and in that of his son Constantine. The document was delivered to the Doge at Venice by Theodore, Bishop of Cernikum, and Symeon Counalis.¹⁸

Such were the promises that Michael freely made to secure his position in Epiros. In the five years since he had set himself up as Despot he had skilfully appeased his enemies by playing them

off one against the other. By professing obedience to the Pope he had compromised the claims of Venice; and by acknowledging the suzerainty of Venice he had ransomed himself from his embarrassing alliance with the Latin Emperor. In 1210 the Despotate ceased to be merely a place of refuge on the defensive against the Latins. Under Michael's leadership it became the base for an offensive campaign against the enemies of the Greeks, an independent state whose boundaries were steadily extended at the expense of Franks, Lombards, and Venetians. The agreements that Michael had made with the Pope, the Emperor, and the Doge were soon revealed as nothing more than the diplomatic preliminaries to a declaration of war on all of them.

The history of Michael's warfare against the Franks and the Lombard Kingdom of Thessalonike can only be pieced together from scattered references, many of them made by his enemies. The Byzantine historians were interested in the Despotate only insofar as its success or failure influenced the fortunes of the Laskarids of Nicaea; and later historians of the period, following their accounts, have inferred that Michael waged only sporadic guerilla campaigns to the east of the Pindos mountains, harassing the Latins but gaining no substantial victories over them. But the letters of Pope Innocent III, who took a lively interest in the progress of the Roman Church in Greece, combined with references in the correspondence of the later Greek bishops of the Despotate, provide evidence that Michael's conquests from the enemy in Thessaly were of a more permanent nature.

In the summer of 1210 he opened his first offensive in the region of Thessalonike. The easy contempt that he showed for his treaty with the Emperor Henry barely a year after it had been signed horrified the Pope, and must have caused the Doge to have doubts about his sincerity. The similar treachery of Theodore Laskaris, who had also broken his treaty with the Emperor, might be compared; but it seems difficult to find any excuse for perjury which Michael was almost certainly meditating at the time of his negotiations with Henry. The Despots of Epiros were seldom scrupulous in observing the pledges that they found it expedient to make with the Latins. The Emperor complained bitterly of Michael's conduct. The Pope excommunicated him. To make matters worse it was revealed that the first Greek army to attack the

Kingdom of Thessalonike was partly made up of Frankish mercenaries that Michael had lured across the mountains.

The attack was a resounding success. A gruesome account of it is contained in a letter of Innocent III to the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, written in December 1210. Michael succeeded in ambushing and capturing the Emperor's Constable, Amadeo Buffa, together with his retinue of a hundred knights. Some of the knights were slaughtered, the rest imprisoned and beaten. The Constable and his chaplain with three of their companions were crucified.¹⁹

The Pope's letter refers to other attacks that may not have been so spectacular. But Michael's campaign seems to have been both serious and extensive. The Emperor's camp was stormed, castles and villages were burnt, and numerous members of the Latin clergy were executed. The Pope was particularly concerned at Michael's hostility to the Roman Church, and worried about the number of Frankish soldiers who 'blinded by greed' had accepted his offers of pay. The penalty of excommunication was laid on them as on Michael. The Emperor was exhorted to prevent desertion by increasing the pay of his troops, and a stern warning and threat of a like penalty was held out to any Latins who sided with the Greeks, especially with Michael.

In his campaign against Thessalonike Michael was soon joined by a Bulgarian adventurer called Dobromir Strez. When Kalojan died in 1207 the Bulgarian throne had been usurped by his nephew Boril, two of whose relatives took the opportunity to set themselves up as independent chieftains. Boril's cousin, Alexios Slav, chose as his headquarters the fortress of Melnik above the valley of the Strymon, and from there extended his rule over the mountains to the north of Serres and Drama. In 1208 he married the illegitimate daughter of the Latin Emperor and was granted the title of Despot for his assistance against the Emperor's enemies. Dobromir Strez was a brother of King Boril. Kalojan had made him his commandant of the rocky fortresses of Prosek and Strumica in the Vardar valley, and later outlawed him on suspicion of conspiracy. But in the confusion that followed Kalojan's death Strez had been able to recover his former command with the help of Stephen Nemanja of Serbia. The dominating position of Prosek and its proximity to Thessalonike made him a dangerous

enemy of the Latin Empire; and the damage that he inflicted on the surrounding countryside was so extensive that even the Serbian King who had befriended him contemplated a punitive expedition.²⁰

Michael's operations in the district encouraged this brigand's lust for plunder. They joined forces and their combined attacks on Thessalonike in the autumn of 1210 proved so effective that the Emperor Henry had to hurry from Constantinople to help in the defence of his vassal Kingdom. After a struggle lasting for several months Michael and Strez were forced to retire with heavy losses. Events in the east made the Emperor's return to his capital imperative, so that he was unable to follow up his victory. But before he left Thessalonike in the spring of 1211 he bound both of his enemies under the strictest oaths of loyalty to the Latin Empire; and the short-lived alliance of Michael and Dobromir Strez came to an end.

It may be said to Michael's credit that he made at least one attempt to abide by his promises to the Emperor. For soon after his defeat he turned traitor on his former ally and entered into an agreement of his own with his son-in-law Eustace of Flanders and Berthold of Katzenellenbogen, the regents of Thessalonike. As soon as Henry was gone Strez rose again to the attack, supported by reinforcements from his brother Boril. Michael had no wish to see Thessalonike become part of Boril's Bulgarian Empire. He offered his services to Eustace and Berthold and helped them to win a decisive victory near Pelagonia, from which Strez was never able to recover. This was the only occasion on which Michael fought for the Latin cause, and as such it is remarkable in the Emperor's recapitulation of his otherwise perfidious conduct.²¹

Michael's offensive against Thessalonike lasted only as long as his alliance with Strez. The defence of the city was in able hands, and his defeat by Henry persuaded him that his army could be more effectively employed against the weaker Latin establishments in the south. Once he had ensured that Thessalonike should not fall to a Bulgarian rival he withdrew to his capital at Arta. News had perhaps reached him that Naupaktos and his territories in Aitolia were in danger. The final surrender of Corinth in 1210 had made the Franks masters of almost the whole

of the Corinthian Gulf. On the northern shore of the Gulf the French Baron of Salona, Thomas d'Autremontcourt, commanded the plain between Parnassos and the sea. He had already added to his fief the district of Galaxidi at the entrance to the Bay of Itea and the small islands offshore, and he was meditating schemes of conquest further west. But the patriotic Greeks of Galaxidi sent an urgent appeal to Arta, and Michael brought his army across the hills to their assistance. Local tradition has preserved the memory of a pitched battle in which the Galaxidiotes and the Epirotes fought side by side. The Franks were routed, their Baron killed, and Salona was temporarily restored to the Greeks.²²

The addition of Salona to his territory secured Michael's hold on Naupaktos, and its loss must have convinced the neighbouring Frankish knights of the strength of the Epirote armies. From Salona Michael may have hoped to advance through Gravia up to Lamia. But the French Lord of Gravia, Nicholas of St. Omer, held the road north over the foothills of Parnassos; and further north the Lombard Marquis, Guy Pelavicino, from his castle at Boudonitzia controlled the passes of Thermopylai. Against such powerful opposition the victory at Salona could not be followed up, and Michael saved his strength for an attack on the less ably defended Italian fortresses in Thessaly.

The history of the Latin occupation of Thessaly has not received the publicity given to that of Boiotia, Attika, and the Morea. By the terms of the Partition Treaty the Crusaders under Boniface of Montferrat had been awarded 'the district of Larissa, the province of Vlachia (Thessaly), with all the private and monastic property they contained', as well as Velestino, near Volos, and Neopatras, the modern Hypate. Among the private properties mentioned were the estates of the ex-Empress Euphrosyne at Vessena, Pharsala, Domoko, Ravenika, Halmyros, and Demetrias. The family of Melissenos, to which Michael was related by marriage, also possessed considerable properties in the district round the Gulf of Volos. In a campaign to drive the Latins out of central Thessaly Michael could therefore expect every support, since both Euphrosyne herself and Constantine Melissenos were living as dispossessed refugees at Arta.²³

The principal strongholds of the Latins in this area appear to have been Larissa, Halmyros, and Velestino. There were smaller

settlements at Domoko and Pharsala, and, to the south of the Spercheios river, at Neopatras and Ravenika. At the time of Michael's invasion of Thessaly the defence of these fortresses was far from secure. Larissa, which was made the seat of a Latin Archbishop, had originally been given by Boniface to a Lombard noble, William, in 1205; and Henry had allowed him to stay despite his part in the rebellion in 1209. The subsequent history of Larissa under Latin rule is obscure. The name of William soon disappears from the pages of the chroniclers, and the last Papal communication with Larissa was written in May 1212. Velestino was for a time the fief of Count Berthold of Katzenellenbogen, but passed into other hands when he took up his duties as guardian of the young King of Thessalonike in 1210. Domoko had also been bereft of its first Latin ruler in the same year when Amadeo Buffa was put to death by Michael.²⁴

The strength of these southern dependencies of the Kingdom of Thessalonike had been seriously affected by the Lombard rebellion, and it is doubtful if Latin rule had ever been extended over the Greek and Vlach population much beyond the vicinity of the larger towns. The town of Trikkala, to the west of Larissa, seems never to have suffered occupation by the Crusaders at all. Trikkala stands at the eastern end of the pass that leads over Pindos from Arta into Thessaly; and it may have been from here that Michael led his attack into the Thessalian plain in the spring of 1212. The remaining Lombard knights seem to have offered little resistance, and within the year Michael's army had overrun the country as far east as the Gulf of Volos. By June 1212 the town of Larissa was again under Greek authority, and its cathedral church had been restored to the care of a Greek bishop whose appointment was approved by Michael.²⁵

The Latin Archbishopric of Larissa had been held in high esteem by Pope Innocent III in his efforts to propagate the Roman faith in Greece, and the silence of the Papal records with regard to Larissa after 1212 is significant. The extent of the diocese was considerable, but it is impossible to ascertain how much of the surrounding country was added to the Despotate at this stage. Pharsala and Domoko seem to have been recovered, but the enemy were too strongly established along the Spercheios valley to permit an attack on Lamia. To the east of Larissa, however,

Michael's army made further conquests. Velestino and the district of Demetrias on the coast, now no longer defended by Count Berthold of Katzenellenbogen, were restored to the Greeks. A Latin bishop, who had been appointed to the See of Demetrias, had to be released from his charge by the Archbishop of Thessalonike in 1212, since it was impossible for him to reach his diocese; and Constantine Melissenos, who had fought with Michael's army, returned to his hereditary estates as local governor. A Greek bishop was appointed to the church of Demetrias, and three years later Melissenos founded the Monastery of the Panagia Makrinitissa on the western slopes of Pelion as a thank-offering for his deliverance from the Latins.²⁶

The flourishing emporium of Halmyros on the coast to the south of Velestino doubtless remained partly in foreign hands. It had long been the export centre for the Thessalian cotton-market, with a cosmopolitan population of merchants prepared to do business with Greeks and Latins alike. There is no reason for supposing that the proceeds of this lucrative commerce were diverted either by Franks or Epirotes from the pockets of the Venetian, Genoese, Pisan, and Jewish businessmen who frequented the town.²⁷

The capture of Larissa seriously hindered communications by land between Thessalonike and the Latin states in the south. The Despotate now extended from the Ionian to the Aegean Sea. Michael might well have contemplated an attack from the south on Thessalonike itself. But the Latin Empire and its dependency were in a strong position. The Emperor Henry had recently returned victorious from a campaign against Theodore Laskaris in Asia Minor, and Boril of Bulgaria had, for reasons of his own, made an alliance with him. The regents of Thessalonike could call on the help of the Bulgarians as well as the imperial army of Constantinople. Michael therefore chose to attack another and less suspecting enemy in another quarter.

The pledges that he had given to the Pope and to the Emperor had both been flagrantly disregarded. It remained to break his agreement with Venice, and to drive the Venetians out of Durazzo and Corfu. The burden of suzerainty to Venice had been the price of peace in the Despotate. But it had been only a temporary expedient. Venetians ships had brought soldiers of fortune from

Italy to fight for the Greeks; but so long as Durazzo remained under Italian control the overland route from the Adriatic to Thessalonike was open to reinforcements for the Latins. The elaborate contract that Michael had signed with the Doge in 1210 became a dead letter only three years later. The Duchy of Durazzo which Venice had so much prized was brought again under a Greek governor; and the island of Corfu was added to the Despotate of Epiros.

Little is known of these conquests. The Albanian prince Demetrios doubtless supported his ally in so profitable a cause. Michael launched his attack on Durazzo in 1213, and the Venetian garrison was forced to withdraw after some hard fighting. The only mention of the conquest of Durazzo is made by George Bardanes, the later Metropolitan of Corfu, in an *apologia* of the Despotate addressed to the Patriarch in Nicaea. But the fact is confirmed by the appointment of a Greek bishop to Durazzo in 1213, and it seems that Michael marched north the year after his campaign in Thessaly. Serbian tradition has preserved some memory of the event in an account of Michael's establishment in Durazzo, and of a battle that he is said to have fought and won against the army of Stephen Nemanja at Skodra. The battle at Skodra was the only occasion when the Despots of Epiros made war on the Kingdom of Serbia. The northern limits of the Despotate thereafter stopped short at Durazzo.²⁸

Having deprived Venice of its most valuable possession on the mainland of Epiros Michael turned to the conquest of the island of Corfu. The details of his campaign, the strength of his army and the size of his fleet, have all been forgotten; and the fact itself can only be deduced from a cursory reference in a chrysobull in the archives of Naples. Michael encouraged the Corfiotes to be loyal to the Despotate by renewing certain privileges granted to them by the Emperor Isaac II. The inclusion of Corfu in the Despotate may perhaps be dated to 1214. The Greek Metropolitan, Basil Pediadites, was again in a position of authority in the island by then, and received an invitation to attend the Pope's Council at the Lateran in the following year. It may also be significant of the change of rulers in Corfu that Count Maio Orsini of Cephalonia, who in 1209 had acknowledged the suzerainty of Venice over his islands, entered into a new agreement

with the Pope in 1215, promising to bequeath his property to Rome in the event of his death with no legitimate heir, and to pay an annual tribute to Rome during his lifetime.²⁹

That the capture of two such important places as Durazzo and Corfu should excite no comment from the Greek historians is not strange. The only nearly contemporary historian, George Akropolites, devotes few words to the career of Michael Angelos. His purpose was to represent the Laskarids of Nicaea and their successors as the legitimate heirs to the throne of Byzantium. The rival claimants to that throne, the Despots of Epiros and the Emperors of Trebizon, were dismissed as mere pretenders, and their victories against the common enemy were minimized or ignored. Michael's victories were a thorn in the flesh to Nicaea, and the later historians, who had witnessed the recovery of Constantinople by an Emperor of Nicaea, looked back on the growth of the Despotate as a menace to the claims of the Laskarids, which history was to prove just and righteous. The capture of Durazzo and Corfu must have seemed insignificant in historical perspective beside the conquests of the Nicene armies, which led ultimately and as if by the will of God to the restoration of the Byzantine Empire. Yet both remained in the hands of the Despots almost to that date, and both might have assisted to that end if events had turned out otherwise. Durazzo was one of the chief glories of the Despotate under Michael's successor Theodore, as an inscription on its walls still testifies; and Corfu, under its Bishop George Bardanes, played a conspicuous part in defying the imperialism of Nicaea and asserting the sovereignty of the Despotate of Epiros.

The historical material for the last four years of Michael's reign is meagre in the extreme. The Byzantine sources are inadequate or frankly hostile. The western chroniclers have little to add. The Papal records come to an end in 1213, and the last known dispatch of the Emperor Henry refers to events before 1212. The chronological sequence of events can, however, be partially reconstructed from the writings of the hierarchy of the Epirote Church and the information that they contain concerning the appointment of various bishops in the Despotate between 1212 and 1215.

The Church of Epiros was assumed to be dependent on the

Patriarch of Constantinople, whose title and prerogatives had, since the Latin conquest and the coronation of Theodore Laskaris as Emperor, been adopted by the Bishop of Nicaea. But as the Despotate grew in extent and in political and military importance its rulers encouraged their clergy, who for the most part were content to recognize the authority of a Patriarch at Nicaea, to regard their Church as independent. The idea that the Despotate was autonomous in matters of Church as well as in matters of State was perhaps not fully formulated until after Michael's death. But bishops were appointed to Larissa and Durazzo in 1212 and 1213 without any reference to the Patriarch.

This was the first indication of the fact that the Despot of Epiros was reluctant to submit to the imperial hegemony of Nicaea in any way. Michael Angelos must have been well aware that the claim of Theodore Laskaris to be Emperor had no very strong justification. The position of the Nicene Patriarch, whom Laskaris had appointed, was even more open to question. Michael had no hesitation therefore in ordering the hierarchy of the Epirote Church to convene their own synod for the election of bishops throughout the Despotate as need arose. Towns recovered from the Latins could not be left without bishops and clergy, though there could be no harm in sending reports to the Patriarch at Nicaea from time to time to keep him informed of the appointments made, and to ask for their ratification as a matter of form. Such a report was sent to the Patriarch Michael Autoreianos concerning the appointment of a new Bishop to Larissa, and again in the matter of Durazzo; and it is from references to this report that the dates of the conquest of each town can be inferred. Michael Autoreianos died in 1212, and his two immediate successors protested at what they considered to be uncanonical procedure on the part of the Epirote synod, but declined the responsibility of ratifying the appointments made. The Bishops of Larissa and Durazzo were not officially recognized by the Nicene Patriarch until the time of Manuel Sarantenos, shortly after his accession to the Patriarchate in 1215. A special synod was held to discuss the position of the Church in Epiros, and a Patriarchal legate was sent to Vonitza with authority to confirm the offending bishops and to demand that for the future any similar cases should be referred to Nicaea.³⁰

Larissa if not Durazzo must have been added to the Despotate before the death of Michael Autoreianos in 1212. The new Greek Bishop, Kalospites, was elected on the proposal of the Bishop of Leukas. Dokeianos, the Bishop appointed to the Metropolis of Durazzo, was elected by a synod convened at Michael's request in 1213. The date of his appointment, and so of the conquest of Durazzo from the Venetians, can be confirmed from a letter that John Apokaukos, Metropolitan of Naupaktos, sent to the Patriarch Manuel in 1222. The conquest of Larissa, however, must have taken place early in 1212, for a Greek Bishop of Larissa, presumably Kalospites himself, was in correspondence with Apokaukos in May or June of that year.³¹ Domoko or Thaumakos, which had once been the fief of the Latin Emperor's Constable, was a suffragan bishopric of Larissa. It appears to have had a Greek bishop at least by 1215; and at Demetrias near Volos the Greek Bishop Arsenios had been restored to his church by the same year.³²

It can hardly be supposed that these bishops were appointed while the Latins were still in occupation. The Greek and Roman clergy seldom co-operated. Michael was accused by Pope Innocent III of killing every Latin priest he could lay his hands on; and churches in which the Roman rite had been celebrated were ritually cleansed from pollution by the Greek clergy. The hostility between the two Churches in Greece, fomented by the circumstances of the Latin conquest, made it impossible for there to be bishops of both persuasions in the same diocese. The Greek Bishop of Euboia had been allowed by the Pope to remain in office, but only by doing obeisance to the Latin Archbishop of Athens. The Bishops of the Despotate would never have fulfilled any such conditions. The appointment of Greek bishops pre-supposes that the towns and districts whose churches were under their care had been captured from the Latins and restored to Greek rule. Such appointments were made either by the Despot himself or by a synod of the Epirote hierarchy acting under his instructions. It was in justification of this procedure, which the Nicene Patriarchs considered to be illegal, that the prelates of the Despotate exercised their literary and theological talents in later years; and the hope that Epiros and Nicaea might co-operate in ridding the Byzantine Empire of the Crusaders was

first thwarted by the political implications of this problem of ecclesiastical authority.³³

Michael did not live to pursue his conquests further. At the climax of his career he was murdered in his sleep by one of his servants. The murderer's name was Romaios, but his motives can only be surmised. The date was probably towards the end of 1215, and the town where Michael died is said to have been Bellegrada, the modern Berat in Albania.³⁴

Few if any buildings or monuments survive to illustrate the career of the first Despot of Epiros. Although Arta was his capital Michael seems to have spared little time for its adornment or even for the strengthening of its defences. This task was left for his son Michael II some twenty years later. In Corfu, however, he left a more permanent memory of his name. Marmora, the earliest historian of the island, records that Michael erected several noble buildings, including the Castle of San Angelo on the western shores, above Palaiokastritzza, and fortified Gardichio and other important places on the mainland. There is also documentary evidence for his enlargement and fortification of the town of Ioannina. Michael became 'a second Noah' for the crowds of refugees fleeing from the flood of the Latin conquest. A large colony of these refugees was established in Ioannina, and emergency measures were taken to provide each family with land and property as well as with shelter and protection according to their needs and their social status. The native inhabitants evidently regarded the newcomers with suspicion, and were jealous of the benefits showered upon them, but care was taken by Michael and his successors to ensure that their rights were respected. A later document confirming their privileges refers to Michael as 'the founder, protector, and saviour of Ioannina', who transformed it from a small town into a fortress.³⁵

When Michael died the Despotate included the whole of the Epirote and Akarnanian coast from Durazzo to Naupaktos, the islands of Corfu and Leukas, and on the east Larissa, Salona, and some of central Thessaly. On the north its boundaries with the Bulgarian Empire were still hardly defined, and the Vlachs roamed at will in Macedonia and northern Thessaly; but Michael had established friendly relationships with the chieftains of Albania. Venice had been deprived of Corfu and Durazzo. The

threat of invasion by the Lombards of Thessalonike had been removed with the death of their King and forgotten in their own private quarrels. The Duchy of Athens and Thebes had been virtually isolated from Thessalonike by the capture of Larissa, and the extension of Frankish power towards Naupaktos had been forestalled by Michael's victory at Salona. The Emperor Henry records four pledges of fidelity that Michael had sworn to him, all of them no sooner made than broken. Michael, the 'traditor potentissimus', he lists as third among his enemies after Theodore Laskaris and Boril of Bulgaria. From Henry's point of view the defence of Constantinople was continually menaced by the proximity of Nicaea and Bulgaria. The Despotate was a threat to Thessalonike rather than to the heart of the Latin Empire, and its ruler's attentions were divided between east and west. But the armies of the Despotate, strengthened by the addition of Frankish and Italian mercenaries, had succeeded in gaining a prestige for Epiros which was soon to excite the envy of Nicaea; and Michael's conquests paved the way for the victorious campaigns of his successor, Theodore Angelos, which threatened the very existence of the Latin Empire.³⁶

¹ Akrópolites 24-5. On this count the Byzantine historians, ever antagonistic to the Despotate, accuse Michael of perjury. The facts of the case were later expounded to the Patriarch of Nicaea by the Metropolitan of Corfu. See below, p. 95.

² Akropolites, *loc. cit.* Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, II, p. 123. The legitimacy of this Constantine depends on whether he was the son of Michael's first or second marriage; and the problem is complicated by the fact that the child of his second marriage, the later Michael II, whom the Church and the historians deemed illegitimate, seems to have had the name Constantine as well. The date of Michael II's birth cannot be fixed, but it may have occurred after Theodore's arrival in Greece.

³ 'Signour de Chorynte.' Henri de Valenciennes, *ed.* Longnon, p. 118. (Only the MS. 'C' gives this title.) Theodore is elsewhere called 'quondam dominus Corinthi.' (Letters of Innocent III, xv, 77.)

⁴ Chronicle of the Morea 2096-437. *Livre de la Conquete* 117-72. Letters of Innocent III, xv, 77. Buchon, *Recherches et Matériaux*, vol. I, p. 330.

⁵ Documents published by A. Soloviev, *B.Z.*, XXXIV (1934), p. 304f., and Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, vol. I, no. 133, p. 42. Letters of Innocent III, xi, 7 (to Demetrios, March 1208). Innocent addressed him as 'nobili viro Demetrio Arbanensi principi' and 'judicem Albanorum'. The title of 'panhypersebastos' may have been granted to him by Stephen Nemanja.

⁶ Letters of Innocent III, xii, 96, 97 (to Nicholas, Archdeacon of Durazzo, Demetrios and Michael, 16 and 17 August 1209). Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, I, nos. 135-8, 141, pp. 43-5. S. Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, vol. II, pp. 184, 207. The governor of Durazzo was Marino Valaresco.

⁷ Valenciennes, ed. Longnon, 560-605, p. 61, note 3, and p. 118, note 2. Boudonitza stood in the hills between Thermopylai and the Boiotian plain. See Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 106-9. W. Miller, *Latins in the Levant*, pp. 72-5.

⁸ Valenciennes 641-86. Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 109-11.

⁹ Valenciennes 688-94. The name of Michael's daughter is not known. That she was the eldest of the three appears from the Pope's letter of 7 December 1210 to the Latin Patriarch (Letters of Innocent III, xiii, 184).

¹⁰ Latin text in Tafel and Thomas, II, pp. 119-23; Buchon, *Recherches et Matériaux*, II, p. 210. Dandolo (R.I.S. XII), 336. Martin da Canal, ed. Galvani, 341. See R. L. Wolff, *op. cit.*, *Mélanges H. Grégoire*, IV (1953), pp. 548-9; P. Lemerle, *Trois Actes du Despote d'Epire Michel II concernant Corfu*, *Ελληνικά*, 4 (Προσφορά εἰς Στ. Κυριακής ην, Thessalonike 1953), no. 1, p. 407, and note 10.

¹¹ The river Urchus, now the Shkoumbi, in Albania.

¹² Naupaktos, an early form of the name Lepanto. See Miller, *Latins in the Levant*, p. 79, note 1.

¹³ Anatoliko, or Aitoliko, at the mouth of the river Achelous.

¹⁴ Lesiana (?Lichonia). See Tafel, *Symbolarum criticarum geographiam byzantinam spectantium, partes duae*, II, pp. 60, 94.

¹⁵ Possibly Graditium, a diocese of Durazzo. See Parthey, *Hieroclis Synecdemus*, p. 124.

¹⁶ Dryinopolis.

¹⁷ Glavinitza, near the Akrokerauian promontory. See below, Appendix on the Topography of the Despotate, p. 222.

¹⁸ For Michael's son Constantine, see above, p. 24 and note 2. Cernikum, now Cerminik, to the east of Elbassan, was a suffragan bishopric of Ochrida and Durazzo. See Parthey, *op. cit.*, p. 124, and below, p. 223. The same Symeon Counalis seems to have been Michael's agent for the traffic in mercenaries shipped from Venice to Epiros. See document cited above, p. 22, note 19.

¹⁹ Letters of Innocent III, xiii, 184. Baronius, ed. Theiner, I, p. 276. Amadeo Buffa had formerly been Baron of Domoko, between Lamia and Pharsala. See Valenciennes, ed. Longnon, p. 79, note 1.

²⁰ Slav is called Sthlavos by the Greeks and Esclas or Esclave by the western chroniclers. Henry refers to him as 'Greco nostro'. See below, p. 59. Strez is called Stretzas, Stratiotis, or Streazos. His 'tyranny' is once mentioned by Demetrios Chomatenos (ed. Pitra, 537). For the early career of both Strez and Slav, see Jireček, *Bulgaren*, pp. 243-44; Zlatarski, *Istoriya*, vol. III, pp. 120-2. Niketas Choniates comments on the strength of Prosek (ed. Bonn, 655); see also Jireček, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

²¹ The only evidence for these events is Henry's letter of 13 January 1212 'ad universos amicos suos', in *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de France*, vol. XVIII, pp. 531-2, and Buchon, *Recherches et Matériaux*, vol. II, p. 211. Meliarakes (p. 63, note 2) confuses Henry's account. See also Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 124-6.

²² The name of the Barons of Salona (Amphissa) was formerly given as 'Stromoncourt'. See J. Longnon, *Les Autremontcours, Seigneurs de Salona en Grèce*, *Bulletin de la Société de Hautes Picardie*, XV (1937), pp. 15-48. The story of Michael's battle comes from the Chronicle of Galaxidi (ed. Sathas, pp. 134 and 201), written in 1703 by a monk of the Monastery there which was founded by Michael II. The Frankish Barony was restored some years later under Thomas II d'Autremontcourt, but the Galaxidiotes remained faithful to the Despotate.

²³ Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, I, pp. 486-8: 'Orion Larisse. Provintia Blachie cum personalibus et monastrialibus in eis existentibus. . . . Pertinentia Imperatricis, scilicet Vesna, Fersala, Domocos, Reuenica, duo Almiri, cum Demetriadi. Pertinentia Neopatron. Provincia Velechatine (Velestino) For the castles of Salona and Boudonitza see A. Bon, *Forteresses médiévales de la Grèce centrale*, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, 61 (1937), pp. 148-86.

²⁴ Letters of Innocent III, xv, 73. Valenciennes, ed. Longnon, p. 103, note 4. Both William (Guglielmo de Lalsa) and Berthold were signatories at the second parliament held at Ravenika in May 1210. *Honorii III Opera*, ed. Horoy, vol. IV, p. 414.

²⁵ The Latin Archbishop of Larissa received an invitation to attend the Lateran

Council in 1215. The letters 'ad hoc concilium spectantes' were sent out in April 1213, at which time the Archbishop must have been residing elsewhere. See Mansi, *Conciliorum amplissima Collectio*, vol. XXII, cols. 962-3. The Greek Church boycotted the Council, and there was no bishop of Larissa present. A titular Archbishop of Larissa lived at Thebes in 1222 (Pressutti, *Regesta Honorii III*, vol. II, nos. 4134, 4529, pp. 96, 167). See Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 147-8.

²⁶ Letters of Innocent III, xv, 42. Miklosich and Müller, IV, 382-3 (a document of confirmation by Arsenios, Bishop of Demetrias, dated February, indiction 3). See N. Giannopoulos in *'Επετηρίς*, I (1924), p. 210.

²⁷ The rights of Venetian merchants in the two harbours of Halmyros had been renewed by Alexios III in 1199 (Tafel and Thomas, I, 264-7). An unpublished letter of John Apokaukos refers to the Greeks, Jews, and Italians in the cotton-trade. See N. A. Bees, in *'Επετηρίς*, II (1925), p. 134.

²⁸ Bardanes, letter to the Patriarch, *ed. Mustoxidi, Delle Cose Coreiresi*, Appendix, pp. L-LVI (especially p. LIV). The dates of Michael's Serbian campaign are variously given: 1215 according to Thalloczy, *Ilyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, pp. 104-5; 1212 according to Gopčevic, *Geschichte von Montenegro und Albanien*, p. 35.

²⁹ N. Barone, *Notizie storiche di Re Carlo III di Durazzo*, p. 61. Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, pp. 400 and 684. Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Slavorum*, I, p. 67. For Basil Pediadites, see below, p. 77.

³⁰ See John Apokaukos, *ed. V. G. Vasilievsky, Epirotica Saeculi XIII, V.V.*, III (1896), pp. 241-99. The findings of Manuel's synod are mentioned in his letter to Apokaukos, no. 16, p. 268, especially lines 11-14: "εμενε δὲ η τοιαντη 'αναφορά τὸ έκ εκείνου καὶ μεχρις ημῶν . . . οία δὴ εκείνου καὶ τῶν μετ' εκείνον πατριώρχων δισχε- πανάρτων".

³¹ Apokaukos, *loc. cit.*, no. 17, p. 270, lines 21-3 (written in April 1222). Dokcianos is said to have been appointed 'nine years before' (εννεαετηρίδος ἡδη παρωχηκύλας . . . εκ θελήματος τοῦ δοιδίου κέρη Μιχαήλ τοῦ Κομνηροῦ παρὰ τῶν ντ' αὐτὸν ἐπισκόπων). See N. A. Bees, *Λέων-Μανουὴλ Μακρός* etc., in *'Επετηρίς*, II (1925), pp. 125-31, 133-7 (two letters of Apokaukos of May or June 1212).

³² A MS. from the Metamorphosis Monastery of the Meteora is signed by Symeon Despotopoulos, deacon of Larissa, in April 1215, perhaps the same Symeon later promoted to the Bishopric of Domoko (in 1219), which had been vacated by his father's death. The name Despotopoulos would indicate that his father was Bishop of Domoko in 1215. See Bees, *op. cit.*, pp. 137-8. P. Kerameus, *Analecta*, vol. IV, no. 37, p. 118.

³³ Letters of Innocent III, xi, 179; xiii, 184. W. Norden, *Papsttum und Byzanz*, p. 187, note 6, and p. 197. For the general attitude of the Greeks towards the Roman Church after 1204, see S. Runciman, *The Eastern Schism*, pp. 151-8. See also the decrees of the Lateran Council of 1215, no. 4 ('De Superbia Graecorum contra Latinos') in Mansi, *Conciliorum amplissima Collectio*, vol. XXII, cols. 989-90; Hefele-Leclercq, *Histoire des Conciles*, vol. V (ii), p. 1333. Ph. Lauer, *Une Lettre inédite d'Henri Ier d'Angle*, *Mélanges offerts à M. Gustave Schlumberger*, vol. I (Paris 1924), p. 201 ('. . . Latinos videlicet pro canibus reputabant et eos in contemptum nostri fidei canes communiter appellabant'). Apokaukos, *ed. Vasilievsky*, no. 17, p. 276, lines 23-5: 'τὴν Λατινικὴν μαρπαν διὰ τῆς ημετέρας ἀρρόνου καὶ θρακελᾶς ὁποπερ ἀνακαθαιρέσθω; *ibid.*, no. 26, p. 292, lines 25-6: τὰ ἐπικοπέα Θεοῦ Λατινικῆς μαρπίας ἀπελντρόσατο.'

³⁴ Akropolites 25, Ephraim 7657. See G. Schlumberger, *Numismatique de l'Empire byzantin*, p. 359; Gopčevic, *op. cit.*, p. 36. Aravantinos, *Χρονογραφία*, I, p. 61, makes the murderer an agent of the Pope; Sathas, *Chronicle of Galaxidi*, p. 135, makes him a Frank. The date is given as 1214 by Romanos, Finlay, Miller, and others; 1216 by Meliarakes, DuCange, and Muralt; 1219 by Sathas.

³⁵ A. Marmora, *Historia di Corfu* (Venice 1672), p. 210. Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, p. 401. Gardichio is perhaps the mainland town of Gardiki, near Argyrokastro, which Ali Pasha reduced to ruins. Marmora also says that Michael rebuilt the walls of Durazzo, but this was more probably done by Theodore Angelos. For the refugees in Ioannina, see P. Kerameus, *Περὶ συνοικισμοῦ τῶν Ἰωαννίνων μετὰ τὴν Φραγκικὴν κατάστασιν τῆς*

Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Δελτίον, III (1891), pp. 451-5; M. Dendias, Διενέξεις μεταξὺ αὐτοχθόνων καὶ προσφύγων ἐν Ἡπείρῳ μετά τοῦ 1204 καὶ ἡ ἀκολουθίθεστα εποικιστικὴ πολιτική, Atti VIII Congresso Internazionale di Studi bizantini, 1951, II (1953), pp. 302-6. The dedication of Ioannina to the Archangel Michael, patron of the Angeloi, may perhaps date from Michael's fortification of the town, though a chrysobull of the Emperor Andronikos II refutes the idea, probably out of hostility to the Despotate. See Miklosich and Müller, V, p. 78.

³⁸ See Henry's letter to his friends in the west, *loc. cit.*, pp. 531-2; and in general see Ph. Lauer, *Une Lettre inédite d'Henri Ier*, *loc. cit.*, where Henry describes how he has tamed the insolence of the Greeks ('superborum et sublimium colla Graecorum ... calcaverit').

CHAPTER 3

THEODORE ANGELOS
THE KINGDOM OF THESSALONIKE

1215-25

I

THE founder of the Despotate left two daughters, Theodora, who is mentioned only once, and the wife whom he had given to Eustace of Flanders by way of securing an alliance with Henry in 1209. By his second wife he had two children, Maria and Michael. Michael cannot have been more than ten years old at the time of his father's death, and his right to the succession was overruled by the prompt action of his uncle, Theodore Angelos. Michael I had early shown his regard for Theodore's abilities, and his brothers Constantine and Manuel, who are hardly heard of during the first years of the Despotate, submitted without opposition to the superior claims of Theodore and were soon content to hold office under his administration. As a precaution against intrigue, however, Michael's widow and her son were sent into exile in the Morea, whence the young Michael was to return some fifteen years later to claim his heritage.¹

Theodore Angelos was a more ambitious man and a more accomplished soldier than his brother. His adventurous career first in Asia Minor in the service of Theodore Laskaris, then in the Morea, and finally in the cause of the Despotate had given him valuable military experience; and he was without doubt the best fitted of Michael's relatives to take over the government of Epiros. His wife, Maria Petraliphas, was a member of the landed aristocracy of northern Thessaly. The Petraliphas family, originally of Norman-Italian extraction, had been established in Greece for some generations. Maria's brother John had been governor of Thessaly and Macedonia under the Emperor Isaac II; and the family estates seem to have been centred first in Didymoteichos and then, after the Latin conquest, in the district of Servia in the north of Thessaly.² Theodore's ambition extended far beyond the idea of maintaining an independent state in

northern and central Greece. He dreamt of the expulsion of the Latins not only from Thessalonike but also from Constantinople itself; and like Theodore Laskaris at Nicaea he soon began to consider himself as the legitimate successor and heir presumptive to the Byzantine throne. He widened the boundaries as well as the influence of the Despotate of Epiros. The extent of territory that he inherited from Michael was soon to be almost doubled, thanks to the success of his military leadership against the Bulgarians and the Latins in Macedonia and Thessaly. But the glory of his achievements as a soldier outshone his powers of administration, and his weakness lay in pursuing his victories on the basis of half-completed conquests.

From the moment of his accession Theodore directed his strategy towards the encirclement of the Kingdom of Thessalonike. The road across the mountains that connected Thessalonike with the Adriatic Sea, the ancient *Via Egnatia*, had been sealed at its western end by Michael's capture of Durazzo. But to secure that road against the passage of Latin armies or reinforcements from Italy it was essential to obtain command of the district of Ochrida and Pelagonia. Ochrida could be used to guard the approaches to Elbassan and Durazzo, Pelagonia as a base for operations against Thessalonike. Boril of Bulgaria, whose Empire still extended into the mountains of northern Epiros and Macedonia, had recently given his daughter in marriage to the Latin Emperor, Henry of Flanders. But the coalition of Latins and Bulgarians was not as formidable as it might have been, for Boril's support from his subjects was weakened by revolution, and he was at enmity with the expanding Kingdom of Serbia³.

To ensure that his campaign should not be interrupted Theodore was careful to make his peace with his two northern neighbours, Albania and Serbia. With the Albanians he maintained the friendly relationships established by Michael. Demetrios, 'princeps Albanorum', had died in 1215, leaving his principality to his widow, a daughter of Stephen Nemanja of Serbia. She married again in the following year, taking as her second husband one Gregory Kamonas, who had inherited from his previous marriage to the daughter of Demetrios' brother Ghin the fortress of Kroia.⁴ Involved in this complicated succession was a northern Epirote noble called John Plytos, who was for a time governor of

Kroia, and seems to have favoured the rise to power of Kamonas. Plytos was connected with the Komnenos family, and both he and Kamonas were on friendly terms with Theodore and with the Archbishop of Ochrida.

From the Serbians Theodore could expect encouragement if not active help against Bulgaria. He therefore struck up an alliance with the powerful ruler of Serbia, Stephen Nemanja, and his brother Manuel married Nemanja's sister. Further overtures were made by Nemanja himself, and in 1216 he suggested that his son and heir Stephen Radoslav should marry Thiodora, one of Michael's daughters. A year later he proposed to take as his own wife the illegitimate daughter of Michael, Maria Komnene.⁵ Neither of these plans succeeded, however, owing to the objections of the Church, on the grounds of consanguinity between the Serbians and the Angelos family; and Stephen married instead the grand-daughter of the late Doge of Venice. In the same year, 1217, he achieved the ambition which he had long been fostering, and with the help and encouragement of his Venetian wife, persuaded the Pope to grant him a crown. A Papal legate was sent to Serbia, and the domain of Stephen 'the first-crowned' took on the dignity of a Kingdom.⁶

With the assurance of Albanian and Serbian friendship Theodore lost no time in profiting from the weakness of Bulgaria, and in the spring of 1216 he opened an attack perhaps from the region of Elbassan. No serious resistance seems to have been offered. Within the year the towns of Ochrida and Prilep had surrendered, and the surrounding country at least as far east as Pelagonia was added to the Despotate. The capture of Ochrida was to be of more than purely military significance to the Despotate. For early in the following year Theodore was instrumental in appointing as Archbishop of Ochrida Demetrios Chomatenos, who was to become the great champion of the western Greeks not only against the Latins but also against the claims of the Emperors at Nicaea.⁷

The effect of Theodore's incursion into Bulgaria can be judged by the reaction of the Latin Emperor Henry. The Kingdom of Thessalonike was still in the hands of the young Demetrios of Montferrat and his mother, Margaret of Hungary, with Berthold of Katzenellenbogen and Eustace of Flanders acting as regents.

Early in 1216 Henry abruptly abandoned his commitments in the east and hurried to Thessalonike. Robert of Clari says that his mission was to crown the prince Demetrios as King, but this he had already done seven years before. His sudden arrival in Macedonia can better be explained by his concern for the protection of the Kingdom of Thessalonike. His purpose was to see that the Kingdom was adequately defended in case Theodore, who had already attacked Bulgaria, should invade it from the west. Henry may even have contemplated a campaign against Theodore in support of his Bulgarian father-in-law. But his plans remain a mystery, for he died soon after his arrival in Thessalonike in May 1216.⁸

Henry's fears for the safety of Thessalonike proved to be premature. Theodore was not yet sufficiently confident of his strength to open an attack on the Kingdom. But his hopes must have risen with the news of Henry's sudden death. Henry of Flanders had been an energetic Emperor and a resourceful soldier, 'a real Ares', as one chronicler describes him. He had realized the importance of the defence of Thessalonike for the safety of the Latin throne at Constantinople, and his loss would be felt by both, the more so as there was no immediate successor available.

The circumstances arising out of Henry's death gave Theodore an unexpected opportunity to enhance his prestige at the expense of the Latin Empire. The successor elected by the barons of the Empire was Peter of Courtenay, the husband of Henry's sister, Yolanda. A delegation was sent to him in France, and early in 1217 he set out for the east with his wife and children and a small company of knights and soldiers. On the way he stopped at Rome, wishing to be crowned Emperor by the Pope in person; and Honorius III, loth to prejudice the claims either of Frederick II, Emperor-elect of Germany, or of the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, performed the coronation ceremony outside the walls of the city in the basilica of San Lorenzo on 9 April 1217. Two days later the new Emperor swore to observe his predecessor's agreements with Venice (including Venetian rights over Epiros), with Thessalonike, and with the barons of the Latin Empire; and on 17 April he left Rome for Brindisi, where he was joined by John Colonna, Cardinal of Santa Prassede, who was to accompany him as Papal legate.

With an army of a hundred and sixty knights and five thousand five hundred soldiers he embarked, in Venetian ships, and sailed for Durazzo. The Empress Yolanda, with her daughters, was to continue her journey to Constantinople by sea while her husband, by way of payment for the hire of his ships, was to recover Durazzo in the name of Venice and then force a passage over the Via Egnatia through Ochrida to Thessalonike. The foolhardiness of this plan, from which only Venice could hope to benefit, suggests that neither the extent of Theodore's recent conquests nor the loyalty of his Albanian allies was fully realized. Peter was soon forced to abandon his ineffectual siege of Durazzo, and make his way by another route through hostile and difficult country towards Elbassan. According to the western chroniclers the local Albanian peasantry refused to supply the Emperor and his troops with food or supplies, and put every obstacle in their way; until, quite without warning, they found their path blocked by Theodore Angelos and an Epirote army. A conference was held. Theodore made specious promises to the Cardinal of submission to the Roman Church and to the Latin Emperor, and offered his services to the company as guide and escort. The Emperor and his officers, wearied and disheartened by their march, readily accepted the offer, and agreed to disarm themselves and follow Theodore through the mountain passes. Not long afterwards, Theodore, choosing a moment when the imperial army was lagging some distance behind, surprised Peter of Courtenay and his retinue, attacking them from an ambush and killing all who resisted. The Emperor, the Cardinal, the Archbishop of Salona, and several nobles were taken as hostages and thrown into prison. The soldiers were split up into small companies, robbed of their clothing and equipment, and turned in different directions to be lost in the mountains.⁹

The Greek historians give a less detailed account. They record merely that Theodore met and defeated Peter of Courtenay and his army in the hills near Elbassan, and took them all into captivity. The fate of the Emperor is uncertain. Akropolites says that he died 'by the sword'. The Chronicle of Fossa Nova records that he was imprisoned; Philip Mouskes and Richard of San Germano that he died in prison; and the Aragonese version of the Chronicle of the Morea that he was poisoned.¹⁰ Ernoul, who gives the most

full account, says that he was treacherously arrested at a banquet and died in prison. At all events his disappearance was as complete and as mysterious as that of the Emperor Baldwin in 1205; and neither his own relatives nor the Pope were certain whether he was alive or dead for some years afterwards.¹¹

The fate of John Colonna, the Papal legate, was a happier one. Theodore had no doubt hoped, by holding such distinguished hostages to ransom, to make considerable territorial gain out of the transaction, perhaps even a share in the Kingdom of Thessalonike itself. But he had not reckoned with the power of the Pope and the effect that his action would have on the western world. Pope Honorius III was shocked and indignant. As soon as the news reached him he sent letters to the King of Hungary, the Prince of the Morea, the regent and Patriarch of Constantinople, the Archdeacon of Thessalonike, and the Doge of Venice urging them to take action. He emphasized the serious damage that Theodore's outrage would do to the morale of the Latins in 'Romania', who now found themselves in grave danger; and he asked King Andrew of Hungary to send ambassadors to Theodore with the threat that, if the prisoners were not released, the crusading army which had then been assembled in Hungary would be turned against him. At the same time Honorius wrote to Theodore threatening him with a Crusade of retribution. He accused him of contempt for God, for the Church, and for the safety of his country, and pointed out how much more prudent it would have been for him to follow the example of his brother Michael and solicit the special favour of the Holy See rather than tempt its righteous vengeance. He seems to have been more concerned to effect the release of his Cardinal than to enquire into the fate of the unfortunate Peter of Courtenay; and as messengers to Theodore he sent his subdeacon Andrew and his chaplain, demanding the immediate release without injury of the Cardinal.¹²

Theodore held out as long as he could. In November 1217 the Pope wrote to all the Archbishops of France exhorting them to preach a Crusade for the recovery of the Emperor of Constantinople, and to encourage Robert of Courtenay to come to the rescue of his brother. He sent a second embassy to negotiate with Theodore, headed by the Bishop of Cotrone; and finally, at the beginning of 1218, Theodore came to the reluctant conclusion that

there was nothing to be gained by provoking his enemies further. He offered to set the Cardinal free, and made some pretence of placing the Despotate under the protection of Rome.¹³

His offer immediately changed the situation. The Pope replied thanking him profusely for his humane treatment of the Cardinal and kindly reception of the Papal embassy. He hailed him as a devoted son of the Church, and begged him now to fulfil his promise and release the Cardinal together with the poorer members among his captives, from whose continued imprisonment he could expect no substantial profit. The Despotate was gladly taken once again under Papal protection, and the Bishop of Cotrone was instructed to give absolution to Theodore and confirm his 'return' to the Church, provided that he kept to his promise.¹⁴

The Cardinal, John Colonna, was set at liberty and escorted on his way to Italy in March 1218; but few of the other prisoners were ever heard of again. By giving in to the Pope, however, Theodore saved himself from the consequences of an increasingly dangerous situation, which the Venetians, seeking an opportunity for the recovery of Durazzo, were ready enough to exploit. Honorius III, who only a few months before had urged a Crusade against Theodore, now expressly forbade all Crusaders, especially those who had joined themselves to the Venetians at Ancona and Venice, from entering Theodore's territory on pain of excommunication. He addressed a special letter to the Venetian clergy, in which Theodore was referred to as 'one of the foremost sons of the Church'. No mention is made of the other captives, and it must be assumed that Peter of Courtenay was already dead at the time of Theodore's agreement with the Pope. Venice, who had entertained hopes of combining a moral obligation with the conquest of some land that was still nominally hers, was forced to respect the wishes of the Pope, and concluded a five year treaty with Theodore.¹⁵

Theodore's achievement raised the prestige of the Despotate to an entirely new level. He had successfully tied the hands of the Venetians and emerged as the principal enemy of the Latin Empire. Only a few years later his defeat and capture of Peter of Courtenay was to be recalled as an argument in favour of his own claim to the title of Emperor. It was an act that horrified

the western world, and evoked a grudging measure of praise even from the historians of Nicaea; while the respective Greek and western points of view continue to be reflected in the works of much later writers. The French historian DuCange professed himself astonished by the treachery and savagery of Theodore. The Greek historian Meliarakes patriotically remarked that no blame could be attached to any man who works towards the liberation of his country from foreign oppressors.¹⁶

Both Thessalonike and Constantinople were now in the hands of women. Eustace of Flanders had left Thessalonike in 1216, and a year later Berthold of Katzenellenbogen left for Acre.¹⁷ Queen Margaret of Hungary and her young son Demetrios governed the Kingdom alone. In Constantinople the widowed Empress Yolanda was on the throne. Theodore's conquests from Bulgaria had greatly increased his strength, but his position in Macedonia was not yet secure. The remaining Latin strongholds in Thessaly must also be conquered before he could contemplate an assault on Thessalonike. With these objects in mind, and in order to divest himself of administrative problems, Theodore had already decided to divide the control of his territories. The southern part of the Despotate, Akarnania and Aitolia, had since early in 1217 been committed to the charge of his brother Constantine, whom he adorned with the title of Despot.

Constantine Angelos was an unsympathetic character. In his eagerness to serve his brother's interests he carried out his duties in a selfish and heavy-handed manner. He had previously acted as escort to the dispossessed Emperor Alexios III on his journey from Epiros to Asia Minor. In 1216 he served as a general in Theodore's Bulgarian campaign; and while at Ochrida he looted some valuable plate from the cathedral, which he later shamelessly offered for sale to John Apokaukos, the Metropolitan of Naupaktos. In his new capacity as Despot of Akarnania and Aitolia he soon found himself in violent disagreement with this bishop. To meet the expense of his campaigns Theodore had been obliged to impose a tax on the Metropolis of Naupaktos, which, since the time of Alexios I, had enjoyed the privilege of exemption. Apokaukos was quick to protest against the practice of robbing the Church to pay the State, but Constantine, whose duty it was to levy the tax, appealed to Theodore. The Church of Naupaktos

was commanded to produce the sum of one thousand hyperpera, which, if not forthcoming, Theodore threatened to seize in kind from the treasury of the Metropolis.¹⁸

Apokaukos, however, refused to submit. He retorted with a bitter invective against Theodore's dictatorial methods, and begged him not to hurl accusations and threats at the innocent sufferers in the diocese of Naupaktos. Their total revenue amounted to no more than one hundred and eighty hyperpera per annum. How could they be expected to raise the sum of one thousand? Apokaukos succeeded in interesting several influential people in his case, notably one Nicholas Gorianites, an intimate friend and member of Theodore's court circle. Gorianites wrote to him advising him to co-operate with the wishes of his ruler, and censured him for obstructing the authority of 'the name of Doukas' and for refusing to pay his proper respects to Constantine. Against these and similar charges Apokaukos stoutly defended himself, and asked Gorianites to help him 'quench the first smoke of the fire that threatened to destroy the right of the Church to direct its own affairs'.¹⁹

A compromise was eventually reached, and Apokaukos, either through his own efforts or through the mediation of his friends, won his case. Theodore did not carry out his threats, and even honoured his bishop with a visit to Naupaktos shortly before Easter 1218.²⁰

It was only a temporary reconciliation. Some two years later, while Theodore was engaged in his campaigns in the north, Constantine, given a free hand, requisitioned for his own purposes the episcopal palace at Naupaktos and expelled Apokaukos. An illiterate priest was appointed to take charge, and the cathedral was used as a market place. A suitably co-operative Abbot (*Κομνηνίκος ἡγούμενος*) was installed in the Monastery, principally to see to the collection of the tax, and the monastic revenues were diverted to Constantine's private uses. Such of the clergy as protested were dismissed and their property appropriated. Priests from other districts were brought to Naupaktos, and the name of Apokaukos was banned from the daily prayers of the church.²¹

Meanwhile Apokaukos languished in exile. He described his sufferings at length in letters to his friends Chomatenos and

Michael Akominatos, and soon succumbed to an almost mortal illness as a result of his misery. From Bellas he travelled to Arta and Ioannina in search of support, and considered going to Pelagonia to put his case before Theodore in person. In despair he wrote to Chomatenos at Ochrida, asking him to intervene and use his influence with Theodore, who was then in that district. Finally the matter was submitted to the arbitration of an episcopal synod, at which Theodore was represented; and Apokaukos wrote to the Bishops of Durazzo, Corfu, and Bulgaria (Ochrida), and 'whomsoever Theodore might select from his court' to give a fair hearing and a just judgement to his case. Demetrios of Butrinto, with whom Apokaukos had already conferred, was engaged as his advocate.

The findings of this synod have been preserved. The quarrel between Constantine Angelos and Apokaukos was attributed in great part to mutual misunderstandings, aggravated by an unfortunate bitterness on both sides. The bishop on the one hand was enjoined to submit to the authority of his ruler and his ruler's deputies, Constantine on the other to show due respect for a dignitary of the Church; and it was agreed that the heavy burden of taxation imposed on Naupaktos should be reviewed in the light of a report to be drafted by Apokaukos. As a result Apokaukos was reinstated in his Metropolis, and thenceforth maintained friendly relationships both with Constantine and with Theodore; and the former, from being his sworn enemy, became his life-long friend and protector.²²

Some years later, when Theodore was more sure of his position, it became possible for him to restore to the diocese of Naupaktos all the privileges accorded to it by Alexios I and his successors. A chrysobull, signed by Theodore as Emperor, was issued in 1228. This document gives some idea of the extent to which Naupaktos had suffered 'under the confusion of circumstances' and the necessities arising therefrom. The number of clergy in the Metropolis had fallen from a hundred to only ten; and the ecclesiastical properties had been greatly impoverished, particularly by the extraordinary taxes imposed for the maintenance of the fleet, the cost of which fell more heavily on the coast towns. For the future Naupaktos was to be granted the complete freedom from taxation both in money and in kind that it had formerly

enjoyed. Particular reference was made to Constantine, and a special clause exempted Naupaktos and its inhabitants from his exactions, not through any desire to restrict the performance of his lawful duties, but to ensure that the property of the Church was respected, and to assist him in the definition of his administrative powers.²³

II

Theodore's visit to Naupaktos early in 1218 may have been undertaken partly in the hope of effecting a reconciliation between Constantine and the Bishop. But he had also received news that the Franks were making an attack on the coast-line of Aitolia, aiming no doubt at the recovery of Salona and the capture of Naupaktos. Constantine was meanwhile waging a war of his own in an attempt to capture the town of Neopatras, to the west of Lamia; and Apokaukos, writing to Theodore's wife, lamented the unprepared and defenceless condition of Naupaktos and the surrounding country. The people were taking to the hills every night with all their belongings, and making their way down again by day like a column of ants. They were hourly awaiting invasion. The towns could trust only in the strength of their walls, for they were empty of men and lacking the arms for their defence. With Constantine Angelos and his army absent it was to be feared that the unarmed peasantry would soon be overwhelmed by the 'cloud of barbarism'.²⁴

Theodore, realizing the immediate danger, brought an army south without delay. He succeeded not only in driving back the Franks from the borders of Aitolia but also in bringing victory to his brother's efforts. Both Neopatras and Lamia were added to the Despotate, and Apokaukos lost no time in asking Theodore to recommend that a Bishop be appointed for the newly liberated church of Neopatras. Constantine could now be safely trusted to defend the southern part of the Despotate against its troublesome eastern neighbours, the Franks of Boudonitz and Thebes, and Theodore was free to continue his campaign against the Bulgarians and Latins in Macedonia and Thessaly.²⁵

His object was the encirclement and eventual conquest of

Thessalonike, and the towns and villages on the boundaries of the Kingdom soon fell one after the other. Later in the same year he attacked the huge fortress of Platamona, which still dominates the coast to the north-east of Larissa in central Thessaly. The Lombard garrison were compelled to surrender; and the faithful bishop of Naupaktos was loud in his praises of this victory and joyful at the distress of the Italians, who fell from the castle walls 'like birds from their nest'. Apokaukos followed the news of Theodore's victories with an eager interest, and his letters form a ~~running commentary on the campaign against the Kingdom of Thessalonike~~.

In his rhetorical way he compared Platamona to a rock on which Theodore sat as a fisherman, casting his line into the sea which is Thessalonike, as the sacred oil of St. Demetrios is the ocean that surrounds the world.²⁶

Before long little or nothing remained of the ephemeral Lombard baronies in Thessaly, and the whole district from Neopatras to the southern boundary of Macedonia belonged to the Despotate of Epiros. Theodore controlled a ring of fortresses all round Thessalonike extending from Platamona, through Servia, Berroia, and Prosek, to Serres and Drama. The capture of Prosek, the town in the Vardar valley that Dobromir Strez had formerly held and fortified, in 1219 evoked further congratulations from John Apokaukos. He described it as 'a great wound in the side of Thessalonike' from which the conquest of that city must inevitably result. The odour of the sanctity of St. Demetrios was already in his nostrils and the taste of the waters of the Vardar in his mouth. Already Apokaukos was confident that God would magnify Theodore's name and reward him with the title and the dignity of Emperor.²⁷

To cut off reinforcements that might be sent from Constantinople Theodore completed his encircling movement by crossing the Vardar and laying siege to the town of Serres to the north-east of Thessalonike. By the end of 1221 the Latin garrison had capitulated. A letter of Pope Honorius III, who was by now seriously concerned for the fate of the Kingdom of Thessalonike, refers to this event. In March 1222 the Pope urged the Latin Patriarch to give what help he could to the Archbishop of Serres, whose diocese had recently been overrun by Theodore. The capture of this stage on the land route from Constantinople to

Thessalonike meant the complete isolation of the two capitals; while the sea route was equally endangered by Theodore's control of Platamona, guarding the entrance to the Gulf of Thessalonike.²⁸

To the north of Serres, the country above Melnik and Rhodope was still held by the Bulgarian chieftain Alexios Slav, who had successfully maintained his position by securing allies in both the Greek and the Latin camps. After the death of his first wife he married a member of the Petraliphas family, a niece of Theodore's wife Maria. He was favourably disposed towards the Despotate; and, as a result of their relationship, and for his potentialities as an ally, Theodore carefully avoided interfering with his independence.²⁹

The historians give a far from adequate account of the progress and extent of Theodore's conquests prior to his overthrow of the Kingdom of Thessalonike. But some information can be gained from incidental references in the writings of Apokaukos of Naupaktos and Demetrios Chomatenos, who, as Archbishop of Ochrida, found himself in the front line of attack against both Bulgarians and Latins. To the north and east of Ochrida Theodore's authority was acknowledged at least as far as the towns of Dibra, Prilep, Pelagonia, and Prosek.³⁰ To the south Kastoria, Grevena, and Berroia were all in his hands before 1220. Berroia, which commands the western approaches to Thessalonike, was 'liberated' by Theodore from a Bulgarian army and placed under the command of a governor called Constantine Peganites.³¹ In Thessaly, the town of Servia, between Kozani and Elassona, was captured without a battle, and steps were taken to appoint a Greek Bishop of Servia in 1223.³² To the north-west of Thessalonike Greek bishops are known to have been similarly appointed to the towns of Meglen (Moglena) above Vodena (Edessa), and Strumica to the west of Melnik.³³ By about 1223 Theodore was ruler of the whole of northern Greece from Naupaktos and Neopatras north to a line running from Durazzo to Serres, including a large part of Bulgaria, and confining the Kingdom of Thessalonike to the narrowest limits.

An important outcome of Theodore's conquests in Macedonia was a strengthening of the ties between the Despotate and the Kingdom of Serbia. In the region of Dibra and Skoplje the two states had now a common boundary, and Theodore's Archbishop

in Ochrida, Demetrios Chomatenos, claimed the right to exercise jurisdiction over the Serbian Church. Stephen Nemanja had taken the precaution of having his brother Savas recognized by Nicaea as the autonomous Patriarch of Serbia. But with his armies on the Serbian border Theodore was in a strong position to substantiate the claims of his Archbishop. Nemanja therefore secured his own position and promoted an understanding by entering into an alliance with Theodore. His son Radoslav, heir presumptive to the Serbian throne, took to wife Anna, one of Theodore's two daughters. The objections of the Church, which had earlier forbidden the marriage of Radoslav to Theodore's other daughter, were presumably overruled by a special dispensation of the Serbian Patriarch.³⁴ This arrangement increased the friendship between the Despotate and Serbia. But it gave Theodore a greater interest in Serbian affairs than Nemanja can have envisaged. For Stephen Radoslav, who succeeded to the throne soon afterwards, slavishly followed the policy of his father-in-law, and submitted to all the claims of the Archbishop of Ochrida.³⁵

As it became increasingly evident that Theodore's attacks were being concentrated on Thessalonike, the Latins armed themselves by diplomatic alliances and measures of defence. Early in 1219 the Empress Yolanda cemented the relations with Theodore Laskaris which Henry of Flanders had established five years before by concluding an alliance readily acceptable to him, giving him the hand of her daughter in marriage. Laskaris himself re-opened negotiations for a conference about the union of the Greek and Roman Churches, and signed a treaty with the Venetians granting them commercial privileges in his Kingdom of Nicaea. Laskaris doubtless hoped to secure some claim to the throne of Constantinople by his marriage to the Empress's daughter, and the support of the Papacy and Venice might help him to this end. Yolanda, however, died in September 1219; and after an interval of two years, during which Conon of Béthune and the Papal legate John Colonna, who had finally reached Constantinople, acted as regents, the throne was filled by her son Robert, who was crowned Emperor in 1221. Robert renewed his mother's treaty with Theodore Laskaris, who in turn proposed the marriage of his daughter Eudokia to the Emperor. But this plan fell through on

the death of Laskaris in 1222; and his son-in-law and successor John Vatatzes was obliged to make war on the Latins who had sided with his rival for the throne of Nicaea.³⁶

The overtures made by Theodore Laskaris to the Latins were regarded as open treachery by the Greeks of the Despotate. But Laskaris' death in 1222, followed by a dispute over the succession to Nicaea, seemed to create a favourable opportunity for a final assault on the Latin Empire. In Thessalonike the strength of the Latins had already been much diminished by the departure of most of the Lombard barons. As early as 1220 Theodore's attacks were giving cause for alarm. The Pope officially received the Kingdom of Thessalonike under his protection, and wrote to John Colonna, the regent of the Latin Empire, ordering him to take precautions for the safety of the young King Demetrios. At the same time he excommunicated Theodore, whom he could now no longer regard as 'a devoted son of the Church', and sent instructions to the Archbishops of Brindisi and the neighbouring harbours to forbid the export of any horses, arms, corn, or soldiers by ship from Italy to Epiros.³⁷ Demetrios of Montferrat, still only fifteen years of age, was soon obliged to travel to the west in search of help for the defence of his Kingdom. In March 1222 he was received by the Pope at Anagni, and in the following year, accompanied by the Flemish Archbishop of Thessalonike, Guérin, made his way to the court of the Emperor Frederick II at Ferentino. The result of his appeal to the Pope was the organization of a Crusade for the protection of Thessalonike. It was to be led by Demetrios' step-brother, William of Montferrat, and Hubert of Biandrate, who had championed the claims of William to the throne of Thessalonike and incited the Lombard revolt against Henry of Flanders in 1209.³⁸

As a last effort to deter Theodore from his purpose Honorius III wrote him a personal letter, thanking him once again for having released the Cardinal John Colonna, and urging him to come to terms with the Latin Emperor Robert. But neither the threats nor the diplomacy of the Pope could hold Theodore back from the opportunity that lay before him. With his capture of Serres at the end of 1221 his encirclement of Thessalonike was all but complete, and throughout the year 1222 he made a series of preliminary attacks. Early in the following year the Queen-

mother, Margaret of Hungary, took refuge in her native country, committing herself and her possessions to the protection of the Pope. The defence of the city was under the command of Guy Pelavicino, Marquis of Boudonitz, who had been summoned to act as regent while Demetrios was away in Italy. An advance guard of the promised Crusade from Italy seems to have reached Thessalonike in the summer of 1222, led by Hubert of Biandrate; but the defenders relied more on the thickness of their walls than on their own numbers.³⁹

To forestall the arrival of the Pope's Crusade against him was imperative, and in the early part of 1223 Theodore laid siege to the city. Meanwhile arrangements for the Crusade proceeded slowly. Indulgences were freely offered to those who would come forward, but the Pope was unable to arouse much interest in the cause in Italy or France; and its chief protagonists, William and Demetrios of Montferrat, were unable to raise much money. Honorius himself generously subscribed 15,000 marks, and optimistically excommunicated Theodore yet again for his 'incessant assaults' on Thessalonike. But still the defences held good, and there seemed a chance that the reinforcements would arrive in time to save the city.⁴⁰

Early in 1224 the Pope redoubled his activities. The Venetians were asked to help. Frederick II was induced to lend the sum of 9,000 marks; and the Emperor Robert in Constantinople was given careful instructions regarding his co-operation. At the same time Honorius wrote to Geoffrey of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia, to Otto de la Roche of Athens, and to the Lords of Euboa, ordering them to give every support to William of Montferrat, and to look to the state of their own defences. The castle of Boudonitz, bereft of its Marquis, Guy Pelavicino, had been subjected to attacks by some of Theodore's troops, presumably led by Constantine, about the end of 1223. The Crusade, accompanied by a Papal legate, finally assembled at Brindisi in March 1224.⁴¹

The Pope himself had evolved an elaborate plan of campaign. He had hopes that Theodore might come to some agreement with William of Montferrat, and had authorized his legate to release Theodore from excommunication if he showed himself willing to come to terms. But his hopes cannot have been very

high. Strategy was more likely to succeed than diplomacy. In his letter to the Emperor Robert Honorius had stressed the necessity for close co-ordination between the forces of the Latin Empire and those of the 'Crusaders'; and in April 1224 Robert duly sent an army into Macedonia. His generals, Thierry of Walincourt and Nicholas of Mainvault, laid siege to the town of Serres on their way to Thessalonike; but during their operations news reached them of the defeat of their countrymen and the Laskarid pretenders at Poimanenon, and they hurried back to Constantinople. On their retreat from Serres they were cut off by some of Theodore's army, and though the majority of their soldiers escaped, the officers were captured.

The collapse of this expedition spoiled the Pope's plan of campaign. He had intended that Theodore's army should be engaged to the east of Thessalonike while the Crusading army arrived from the south, perhaps from Boudonitz. But the plan seemed doomed to failure in all directions. At the critical moment William of Montferrat was taken ill at Brindisi. In November 1224 the Pope had to report that the Crusade for the defence of Thessalonike could not possibly set out until the following spring. Meanwhile, Pelavicino and the garrison in Thessalonike, who had been under siege for many months, were reduced to extremities. No help seemed able to get through from Athens or the Morea. The retreat of the Emperor's troops from Serres cut off any hopes of assistance from Constantinople; and finally there came the news that the long-awaited Crusade would not now be arriving. Events had played into Theodore's hands; and the triumphant culmination of his victories came in December 1224. The Latin garrison, discouraged if not defeated, surrendered; and Theodore entered Thessalonike.⁴²

The capture of 'the second city of Byzantium' by the Despot of Epiros was the greatest blow yet inflicted on the Latin Empire. The Crusade, which had been organized for its defence, finally set out for its recovery in March 1225. But by then the Emperor at Constantinople was in no position to spare any of his resources to help. William and Demetrios of Montferrat succeeded in entering Thessaly by way of Halmyros, assisted perhaps by Venetian contacts in the town. But their expedition came to an end after little or nothing had been achieved, with the death of William

and a large part of his army through an epidemic of dysentery, attributed to pollution of their water by the Greeks. The 'Crusaders' then retired discouraged, without ever coming in sight of Thessalonike.⁴³

Demetrios returned to Italy hopeful of further support from Frederick II, but died in 1227, leaving his empty title to that Emperor. Apart from the Duchy of Athens and Thebes and the Marquisate of Boudonitz, the Kingdom of Thessalonike and the whole of northern Greece were in Theodore's hands, and there seemed no force capable of resisting his advance towards Constantinople, there to fulfil the confident predictions of his bishop John Apokaukos by becoming the new Byzantine Emperor.⁴⁴

III

The conquest of Thessalonike, the most important city in Greece, transformed the Despotate into a Kingdom, and the Despot into an Emperor. In the eyes of the western Greeks Theodore was now Emperor in all but name. As his apologists never tired of pointing out, he had defeated a Latin Emperor of Constantinople, overthrown a Latin Kingdom of Thessalonike, and liberated the greater part of northern Greece from foreign oppression. Such achievements clearly betrayed the guiding hand of God. To Theodore himself it seemed that his hereditary claim to the imperial title, distant though it might be, raised him to a more exalted position than John Vatatzes, the Emperor at Nicaea, who could boast of no royal blood whatever. Only the act of coronation was lacking to complete his victory. It would be performed in Thessalonike, pending the recapture of Constantinople, when a second and more sumptuous ceremony would take place.

In the normal course of events the crown was placed on the Emperor's head by the Patriarch. But he, being attached to the court of Nicaea, could hardly be expected to assist in the fulfilment of Theodore's ambitions. Nevertheless as Theodore Laskaris had earlier realized when he was obliged to appoint a Patriarch for his own coronation, custom required that the imperial crown should receive the blessing of the Church. In

default of a Patriarch to perform the ceremony the obvious choice was the Metropolitan of Thessalonike, Constantine Mesopotamites, whom Theodore himself had reinstated. John Apokaukos of Naupaktos, then senior member of the hierarchy of the western Greek church, could also be invited to participate. Mesopotamites, however, resolutely refused to implicate himself in the election or coronation of a rival Emperor. He felt that such an act would be a downright denial of the authority of the Patriarch at Nicaea, whose relationships with the western hierarchy were already none too friendly. Theodore and his brother Constantine, who was then in Thessalonike, having reasoned and argued with him to no avail, appealed to Apokaukos to use what influence he had. Apokaukos wrote a letter to his colleague strongly advising him to change his attitude, and reminding him that he owed his position entirely to Theodore. But Mesopotamites remained adamant, and rather than compromise left Thessalonike and entered a monastery.⁴⁵

Theodore was justly annoyed, but the difficulty was overcome by a synod of clergy held at Arta. Apokaukos presided and the synod confirmed Theodore's claim to the imperial crown, while appointing Demetrios Chomatenos, Archbishop of Ochrida, to perform the ceremony of coronation. The choice was well made, for Chomatenos had no scruples about his allegiance to the Patriarch or the Emperor at Nicaea. An official statement was drawn up by the assembled bishops, laying emphasis on the heroic achievements of Theodore in the defence and restoration of Orthodox Christianity in Greece. It was worded with a view to impressing the Greek world, and not least the authorites in Nicaea, with the justice of Theodore's reward. Mesopotamites was not alone among the western Greek clergy in deplored the break with the Patriarchate at Nicaea which Theodore had done so much to create, and which his coronation as Emperor would certainly aggravate. Apokaukos himself was uneasy in his mind. But Demetrios Chomatenos, on whom the honour of officiating at the ceremony had now devolved, was already firmly convinced of his independence from the Patriarch, and was prepared to justify his actions by some complicated historical research into the privileges granted to the diocese of Ochrida by Justinian.⁴⁶

The synod at Arta must have taken place at the beginning of



1225, and the coronation was performed at Thessalonike by Chomatenos shortly afterwards. Apokaukos, who was compelled by his ill-health and the severity of the winter to remain in Arta until March, wrote to Theodore and Maria expressing the hope that he would not be deprived of the joy and glory of their coronation. He made arrangements to stay with the Bishop of Larissa on his way north to Thessalonike. But he seems finally to have been unable to make the journey, and had to content himself with writing a letter of congratulation to Theodore before the ceremony, in which he imparted some advice on the qualities essential to a monarch, and affirmed his belief that, with God's help, Theodore would yet 'lay all his enemies beneath his feet, and tread on the soil of Constantinople'.⁴⁷

Theodore's claim to the title of King of Thessalonike, which he had won by his own efforts, could hardly be disputed by the Emperor at Nicaea; and John Vatatzes seems to have been prepared to acknowledge the justice of that claim, provided always that the Kingdom was held under suzerainty to himself. But Theodore's ambition could tolerate no such compromise. It was his firm conviction that he was now the one true Emperor of Byzantium; and his conviction was upheld by the powerful arguments of his supporters against the repeated protests and imprecations of the Patriarch and Emperor at Nicaea. Neither Chomatenos nor Bardanes now hesitated to address Theodore as 'Emperor crowned by God'. Henceforth his signature on documents of state was that of the Byzantine Emperor: *Θεόδωρος ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ρωμαίων Κομνηνὸς ὁ Δούκας*. The coins that have been attributed to him represent him in the full regalia of the Byzantine court, sceptre and orb in hand, with the scarlet boots and purple robe; and his imperial title was recognized at the height of his career even by the barons of the Latin Empire, for in the truce that he made with them in 1228 he is styled 'altissimo imperatore graecorum domino Teodoro imperatore duca'.⁴⁸

While the Patriarch and the Emperor of Nicaea vainly protested and threatened, Theodore set about the establishment of an imperial government over his provinces in Greece and Macedonia. After his coronation as Emperor he surrounded himself with all the dignities befitting his new status and all the customary

ceremonial of the Byzantine court. The titles of Despot, Dux, Sebastokrator, Great Domestic, Protovestiarios, and others, as well as a variety of the purely honorary titles invented by the Komnenian Emperors, were conferred on the aristocracy and officials of his new kingdom.⁴⁹ What little is known of the administration of Thessalonike and the western provinces under Theodore's rule derives only from passing references, mainly in the writings of Demetrios Chomatenos. Many of the officials and ministers of state were appointed from amongst Theodore's own relatives or those of his wife, Maria Petraliphas; and some even belonged to aristocratic families whose other members held offices at the court of Nicaea. Theodore's brother-in-law, John Petraliphas, was *μέγας χαρτονλάριος* to John Vatatzes, and his nephew Theodore Petraliphas fought for Nicaea against the Despotate in later years.⁵⁰ Theodore's brothers, Constantine and Manuel, had already been given the rank of Despot. The title of Dux was accorded to the governors of the separate provinces and districts of the Kingdom and Despotate. John Plytos, who was connected with the Komnenos family, was governor or Dux at different times of Ochrida, Berroia, and Kroia. He also held office as *μεσάζων*, or chamberlain of Theodore's court, as well as the honorary title of *πανυπερστόβαστος*, which was generally reserved for members of the imperial family.⁵¹ One Valos Tzamas, who was related to Theodore by marriage, was governor of Berroia at some stage; and one Nikephoros Mykari is mentioned as governor of Bellas about 1229. Nicholas Gorianites, the friend of Theodore and Apokaukos, was *μεγαλυπέροχος δοῦξ τῆς ἐπισκέψεως Ἀχελῶν* in Akarnania; and Constantine Peganites, a member of whose family was Dux of Thessalonike, is referred to as *μεγαλοδοξότατος δοῦξ Βερροίας*, having previously been honoured with the rank of Despot. The title of *πανυπέροτατος δεσπότης* was held also by one Euthymios Tornikes, who seems to have held a position of authority in Arta. Other members of the Tornikes family were in the service of the Emperor at Nicaea some years later, notably Demetrios Tornikes, whose daughter married Theodore Petraliphas, the nephew of Theodore Angelos.⁵²

The duties of these governors were administrative and judicial rather than military, though by rank they corresponded to the earlier *στρατηγοί* or military governors, and the districts over

which they exercised authority were still referred to as Themes. The principal towns were administered by corporations of archons. In Durazzo Theodore appointed as archon Alexios Pediadites, of the same family as the former Metropolitan of Corfu and himself a Corfiote, who in 1223 bore the titles of *μεγαλεπιφανέστατος ἀρχων . . . ὁ ἄντας* and *πανσέβαστος σεβαστός*. George Pediadites was one of the archons of Berroia, and the names of some of the archons of the town of Arta are recorded.⁵³

After 1224 the seat of government and the central administration of the western Greeks must have been transferred to Thessalonike. There the Senate held its meetings. The council of Senators (*συγκλητικὸν βουλευτήριον*) was composed mainly of members appointed by Theodore, but still included a few of the members of the Senate who had fled from Constantinople in 1204. The defence of the citadel and walls of Thessalonike was under the command of a *καστροφύλαξ*, who was in charge of a body of Tzakonian troops, and his duties extended also to the functions of a police force within the city. Arta became only a secondary capital of the kingdom, perhaps even subordinate in importance to Durazzo, which Theodore is said to have 'loved more than all the other cities in his realm'.⁵⁴

Even from the few and scattered references that exist it is clear enough that the Despotate of Epiros, guided by Theodore's ambition, had become more than the rather provisional and *ex tempore* organization built up by his predecessor Michael. Graced by the addition of the Kingdom of Thessalonike it had been raised, in the opinion of its inhabitants, to the status of the Byzantine Empire in exile; and its dignity was at least no less than that of the Kingdom of Nicaea. Neither in matters of Church nor in matters of State was Theodore prepared to acknowledge any allegiance to Nicaea; and his coronation as Emperor and King, coupled with the pontifical claims of his learned and ambitious Archbishop, Demetrios Chomatenos, opened a long chapter of rivalry and hostility between the Greeks of Epiros and the Greeks of Nicaea, that distracted the attentions of both from their principal object, the recovery of Byzantium from the Latins.

The attitude of Nicaea to the establishment of an independent Kingdom and a rival Emperor in Greece, reflected as it is in the

pages of the historians, was one of indignation and resentment. Theodore's achievements against the common enemy provoked only the bitterest jealousy. In retrospect the historians of Nicaea recognized but little significance in his coronation, and studiously ignored his claims to the title of Emperor of the Romans. They never suggested that the extent of territory ruled from Thessalonike was at one time greater than that ruled from Nicaea, nor that the title of Emperor might perhaps be as well applied to Theodore Angelos Komnenos Doukas as to John Vatatzes. Akropolites could grudgingly admit that the defeat of the Latin Emperor Peter of Courtenay had been a 'help to the cause of the Greeks'. But he looked back on Theodore's other victories merely as impediments to the progress of Nicaea, and his final defeat as the just punishment of God. Theodore and his successors are depicted as 'rebels' bent on thwarting the legally and divinely constituted ruler of the Greeks, who, in the person of Vatatzes, generously allowed them to exercise authority over the towns which they had conquered, but gave them no title to independence. To emphasize the point, Akropolites makes much of Theodore's ignorance of the procedure and traditions of the Byzantine court, and mocks at the 'Bulgarian or rather barbarian' foundations on which he had built his kingdom. Gregoras, who lived at an even further remove from the events that he records, describes Theodore as 'an evil upstart from the Thessalian depths', a man of drastic action and revolutionary ambition, who succeeded only in destroying what little was left from the devastations of Latins and Bulgarians.⁵⁵

The attitude of the western half of the Greek world, which can be judged from contemporary sources, was quite the opposite. The Greeks of the west, who had more cause to resent the degradations of foreign invaders than those of the east, naturally regarded both Michael and Theodore as heaven-sent saviours from the Franks, Italians, Bulgarians, and others who had overrun their country, rather than as rebels against the authority of Nicaea. Michael Akominatos, the exiled Archbishop of Athens, who had seen his own beloved city invaded by the 'barbarians', could share in this sentiment without compromising his allegiance to the Emperor at Nicaea. But the current feeling among the western Greeks is best expressed in the eulogies of Theodore that dominate

the writings of Apokaukos, Bardanes, and Chomatenos. Even before his coronation Apokaukos hailed him as 'the God-sent ruler and King of the western Greeks'. Later he was to call him the 'saviour of Christianity in Greece', the 'great and powerful Komnenos', and even taxed the Patriarch with not addressing him as King. The epithets showered on Theodore by Chomatenos and Bardanes are no less striking and eloquent. In a long panegyric Chomatenos recalls how Theodore has 'trampled on his enemies, and girding himself with the sword of the Almighty, has severed the heads of the arrogant. The wretched rulers of Thessalonike he has led away in chains from its walls, thereby completing the destruction of his foes and the restoration of his country'. The toils and trials that Theodore had endured for the liberation of the Greeks had earned him the title of Emperor; and the fact of his imperial ancestry and royal bearing had fitted him for the crown finally bestowed on him by God. Bardanes also lays emphasis on the divine source of Theodore's authority, his imperial heredity, and his sacred right to the crown and sceptre of Empire.⁵⁶

The general sentiments of the western Greeks with regard to their ruler were officially summed up in the synodical resolution drafted at Arta in 1225, concerning Theodore's coronation:

'Paul the Holy Apostle, discoursing on belief in Christ, says: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation". We then, all appointed bishops of this western land . . . follow the apostolic injunction, and with our hearts believe unto the righteousness of the election, coronation, and anointment of our mighty and holy ruler and King, the lord Theodore Doukas, while confessing it with our mouths and confirming it in writing with our hands. . . . Innumerable are the places he has delivered out of the hands of the Latins and Scythians, and many the bishoprics and monasteries that he has cleansed from their pollution, in these granting to their own bishops the authority to replace the banished ministers of our Lord, in those reinstating Abbots, so that both might once again shepherd their own flocks. But what is greater, and what is acknowledged by all, is that he, being the descendant of various Emperors and entitled by

right to imperial rank, as an experienced soldier and ceaseless guardian of our interests, has received the reward of royalty by the acknowledgement of bishops, by the acclaim of the whole clergy, the monastic communities, and the army, and has thus ascended to the Imperium. Him alone we acknowledge as King, and him we crown, and him we anoint; and what we believe and confess unto righteousness and unto salvation we here confirm with our several signatures'.

A contemporary inscription on a tower to the north-west of Durazzo confirms to this day the reputation that Theodore enjoyed among his own people, and commands the traveller to mark and wonder at the glory of 'the son of John Sebastokrator, Theodore Doukas Komnenos, born of the purple, mighty in battle, strong of arm, invincible to his enemies, and tireless in his labours'.⁵⁷

¹ It is said that Theodore even contemplated the murder of his young nephew. See Job, *ed.* Mustoxidi, p. 44; *ed.* Buchon, pp. 402-3; *ed.* Migne, pp. 905-6 A.

² For the Petraliphas family, descended from Peter of Alifa, see Marquis de la Force, *Les Conseillers latins d'Alexis Comnène*, *Byzantion*, XI (1936), pp. 158-60. See also below, Appendix I, pp. 215-16.

³ See Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, p. 149.

⁴ See the correspondence of Demetrios Chomatenos and Kamonas in J. B. Pitra, *Analecta sacra*, vol. VII, cols. 1-11. The Bishop of Kroia protested; but Chomatenos, then Chartophylax of the Church of Bulgaria, upheld the legality of the marriage (Pitra, *loc. cit.*, cols. 21-8). See Genealogical Table III below.

⁵ See M. Laskaris, *Vizantiski princeze u srednjevkovnoj Srbiji*, (Belgrade University dissertation 1926), pp. 38-53.

⁶ Chomatenos, *ed.* Pitra, 49-52 (letter to Stephen Nemanja). Dandolo (*R.I.S.* XII), 340. Jireček, *Geschichte der Serben*, pp. 294-7. Laskaris, *op. cit.*, The Serbian account of Nemanja's coronation is somewhat different. See Meliarakes, pp. 644-5.

⁷ Akropolites 25. Ephraim 7669-670. For the dates of Demetrios Chomatenos, see below, pp. 80, 121-2.

⁸ Robert of Clari, *ed.* P. Lauer, 109. Ernoul 391. Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 150-1. Margaret of Hungary is known to have appointed one George Phrangopoulos as Dux of Thessalonike (Chomatenos, *ed.* Pitra, 447).

⁹ Akropolites 25-6. Ephraim 7675-86. Ernoul 391-3. Philip Mouskes, *Chronique Rimée*, 23019-31. Richard of San Germano, *ed.* Garufi, 77-8. Dandolo (*R.I.S.* XII), 340. Chronicle of Fossa Nova (*M.G.H.* XIX), 301. Alberic of Trois Fontaines (*M.G.H.* XXIII), 906. See Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 153-5. For the attitude of Frederick II to Peter's coronation, see S. Borsari, *Federico II e l'Oriente bizantino*, in *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 63 (1951), (pp. 279-91), p. 283. Both Romanos (p. 26) and Meliarakes (p. 125) maintain that Peter captured Durazzo and that it was later recovered by Theodore. But there is no hint of this in the sources.

¹⁰ Mouskes, 23030-1. San Germano (78) says that Theodore was dissuaded from murdering his prisoners by the advice and foresight of his friends, who saw their potential uses as hostages.

¹¹ Ernoul 393. Dandolo (*loc. cit.*) gives a similar version. The Aragonese Chronicle sets the scene in Trikkala in Thessaly. See Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, p. 156.

¹² Pressutti, *Regesta Honorii III*, I, nos. 684-91, pp. 119-20, no. 720, p. 125. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, ed. Theiner, vol. 20, pp. 367-8, §§ 13-15.

¹³ Pressutti, I, no. 859, p. 146. Baronius, vol. 20, p. 394, §§ 20-21. Theodore himself sent an embassy to the Pope and seems to have agreed that the Latins resident in his territory should for three years pay a tithe of their property towards the deliverance of the Holy Land. Pressutti, I, nos. 1029, 1261. Norden, *Papsttum und Byzanz*, p. 299, note 1, and Appendix III, p. 749.

¹⁴ Pressutti, I, nos. 1023-4, p. 173 (25 January 1218); no. 1029, p. 174. Baronius, vol. 20, p. 395, §§ 21-3.

¹⁵ Richard of San Germano 80. Pressutti, I, nos. 1030, 1031, pp. 174-5. Baronius, *loc. cit.*

¹⁶ DuCange, *Histoire de l'Empire de Constantinople*, I, pp. 155-7. Meliarakes, p. 126, note 1.

¹⁷ Valenciennes, ed. Longnon, p. 76, note 4.

¹⁸ Letter of John Apokaukos to Demetrios Chomatenos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskumu*, I (St. Petersburg, 1907), no. 6, pp. 239-43 (the exemption of Naupaktos had been earlier confirmed both by Michael and by Theodore, *ibid.*, p. 242); and to Theodore, ed. Petrides, *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique russe à Constantinople*, XIV (Sofia 1909), no. 9, pp. 10-13. See also the valuable monograph of M. Wellhofer, *Johannes Apokaukos, Metropolit von Naupaktos*, Munich 1913, pp. 19-23.

¹⁹ Apokaukos, ed. Petrides, no. 9, p. 11 (to Theodore); *ibid.*, no. 10, pp. 13-16 (to Gorianites). Gorianites is addressed as: πανηπερηγότατε καὶ λογιώτατε ποντικόν νιόν, τῷ κρατῶν πανοικεότατος Δούκα. He was later Dux of the district of Achelous (P. Kerameus, *Iεροσολαμική Βιβλιοθήκη*, I, 340). One of the charges he brought against Apokaukos concerned the appointment of a bishop to Dryinopolis without reference to Theodore.

²⁰ Apokaukos, ed. Petrides, no. 11, pp. 16-17 (to Gorianites); no. 21, p. 23 (to Theodore). See Wellhofer, *op. cit.*, pp. 20-1. From Naupaktos Theodore went north to Ioannina and Devol.

²¹ Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskumu*, no. 6, pp. 239-44, and no. 7, pp. 244-8 (to Chomatenos). The Bishop of Zetounion (Lamia) grievously offended his friend Apokaukos by accepting an invitation from Constantine to officiate in the Monastery at Naupaktos (Apokaukos, ed. Petrides, no. 17, p. 21; Wellhofer, *op. cit.*, p. 22).

²² Apokaukos, letter to Akominatos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Αρμονία*, III (1902), no. 5, p. 287. To Chomatenos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskumu*, no. 6, p. 239. To Dokeianos, Bishop of Durazzo, ed. P. Kerameus, *B.Z.* XIV (1905), no. 3, p. 573; ed. Petrides, no. 27, pp. 27-8. To Demetrios, Bishop of Butrinto, ed. Petrides, no. 22, pp. 23-4. To Theodore, ed. Petrides, no. 33, pp. 31-2. The findings of the synod are published by P. Kerameus, *Analecta*, vol. IV, no. 39, p. 121. Constantine's 'tyranny' lasted for a space of five years. Apokaukos was still in exile after the appointment of Bardanes to Corfu in 1219. The synod may thus be dated to 1221. (Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskumu*, nos. 6 and 8, pp. 242, 248; *V.V.*, XIII, no. 9, p. 349 (to Bardanes)).

²³ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 29, pp. 296-9. See P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (Thessalonike 1953), no. 3, p. 408, note 13. Constantine founded a Monastery of St. John the Forerunner on the banks of the Arachthos river south of Arta (Serapheim, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικής τίνος περιλήψεως τῆς . . . Αρτας . . .*, (Athens 1884), pp. 369-70). He also added an exo-narthex to the chapel of the Monastery at Varnakova, behind Naupaktos, in 1229. In the surviving copy of the inscription that records this there is a gloss inserted by some monk who remembered Constantine's extortion and expropriation of church property. He is referred to as 'the most accursed and most renowned Despot' (*επαρτον τηνενεφημιστατον δεσποτον κυρον Κωνσταντινον του Δουκα*). See Lambros in *Neos Hellenomnenon*, IV (1909), p. 382f.

²⁴ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 1, pp. 241-2; ed. Petrides, no. 26, pp. 26-7.

²⁵ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 2, pp. 243-4. The new Bishop of Neopatras was called Kostomeres (*ibid.*, p. 276, line 6).

²⁶ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 4, pp. 246-8. In 1209 Platarmona had been held by a Lombard baron called Roland Piche. See Martin da Canal 344; Valenciennes, ed. Longnon, 637, 639, 662, and p. 93, note 1.

²⁷ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 3, pp. 244-6. The date of the capture of Prosek (Prousakon) can be inferred from the reference to the proposed appointment of George Bardanes as Metropolitan of Corfu, which occurred in October 1219 (*ibid.*, p. 245, line 36, p. 261, line 21). Among the prisoners taken in Thessaly was a Chamberlain (*παρακούμπερος*) perhaps of the court of Thessalonike, and a Vlach chieftain called Taronas, perhaps the Taronas whose daughter later married John Doukas, son of Michael II Angelos (Apokaukos, ed. Petrides, no. 32, pp. 31-2).

²⁸ Pressutti, II, no. 3877, p. 56 ('noviter occupata a bellic Theodoro'). One Gorianites was appointed Bishop of Serres by Theodore (Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, p. 276, line 8).

²⁹ Akropolites 39. Jireček, *Bulgaren*, pp. 243-4. Zlatarski, *Istorija*, pp. 272-3, 277-280, 322. A decree of Alexios Sthlavos Despot dated 1220 relates to the Speleotissa Monastery near Melnik (*Spisanie na Bulgarskata Akademija na naukite*, 45 (hist.-phil., sect. 22, 1933), pp. 1-6).

³⁰ Chomatenos, ed. Pitra, 261, 325, 435.

³¹ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, p. 248. Chomatenos 80, 273, 379, 395, 446, 465, 525, 565.

³² Chomatenos 335-8.

³³ Chomatenos 545, 566; 63, 536. Strumica (Stroummitza) is to be identified with Tiberiopolis. See L. Petit, in *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique russe à Constantinople*, VI (1900), pp. 95-6.

³⁴ Jireček, *Serben*, pp. 298-300. M. Laskaris, *Vizantiski princeze*, pp. 38-53. The marriage is twice mentioned by Apokaukos (ed. Vasilievsky, p. 245; ed. Petrides, p. 23). The gold engagement ring given to Anna by Radoslav has been found. It has the metrical inscription: Μνήστρον Στρέφανον Δουκικής πλέγη κλάδου Κομνηνοφίνης ταῦ Χρεούν "Αννα δέκου. See Krumbacher, *Sitzungsberichte der bayer. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu München*, (1906), pp. 421-51. Radoslav took the name Doukas from his mother Eudokia, and after his accession signed his documents as 'King Stephen Doukas' (see Miklosich, *Monumenta Serbica*, pp. 19-20).

³⁵ Jireček, *Serben*, I, p. 303. Chomatenos of Ochrida and not the Patriarch of Nicaea was Radoslav's advisor on ecclesiastical matters. The replies to questions on dogmatic problems composed by Chomatenos (cols. 685-710) were addressed to Stephen Radoslav and not to his father. See M. Drinov, in *V.V.*, I (1894), p. 327f., and M. Laskaris, *op. cit.* Radoslav's portrait, with that of Nemanja, is on the walls of the church at Zica. (Strzygowski, in *Denkschriften der Wien. Akademie*, 52 (1906), Abt. 40, pp. 109-11.)

³⁶ Akropolites 30-1. Dandolo 341. Tafel and Thomas, II, pp. 205-7. See Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 157-62 and references.

³⁷ Pressutti, I, no. 2856, p. 472 (11 December 1220); no. 2858, p. 473; II, no. 4354, p. 134.

³⁸ Pressutti, II, nos. 3854, 4353, pp. 52, 134. Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia Diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, vol. II, p. 328. Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, vol. 20, pp. 456-7, 467. Hubert of Biandrate was then in the service of Frederick II (see Valenciennes, ed. Longnon, p. 61, note 3, and p. 118, note 2).

³⁹ Pressutti, II, no. 4121, p. 94 (26 September 1222); no. 4269, p. 120 (30 March 1223); nos. 4353, 4355, p. 134. Baronius, vol. 20, p. 455, §§ 17-18.

⁴⁰ Pressutti, II, no. 4354, p. 134; nos. 4753-4, pp. 205-6. Horoy, *Honorii III Opera*, IV, no. 107, cols. 324-5. Richard of San Germano 113-14. Baronius, vol. 20, p. 467, §§ 11-13.

⁴¹ Pressutti, II, nos. 4704, 4754, 4758, 5132, pp. 197, 206, 207, 274. Huillard-Bréholles, *op. cit.*, II, p. 425. Richard of San Germano, ed. Garufi, 113-14, 119-20, 120, note 1. Baronius, vol. 20, pp. 485-7.

⁴² Akropolites 35. Ephraim 7950-6. Philip Mouskes 23183-94. The exact date of

the capture of Thessalonike cannot be determined, but it can be set between 1 October and 31 December 1224. See J. Longnon, *La Reprise de Salonique par les Grecs en 1224*, *Actes du VIe Congrès International d'études byzantines*, I (Paris 1950), pp. 141-6. B. Sinogowitz, *Zur Eroberung Thessalonikes im Herbst 1224*, *B.Z.*, 45 (1952), p. 28. The long siege is mentioned by Richard of San Germano (114, 'diu eam obsidendo'). For the Pope's plan of campaign see Norden, *Papsttum und Byzanz*, p. 302, note 5 and 303.

⁴³ Pressutti, II, nos. 5186, 5464, pp. 283, 333. Horoy, *Honorii III Opera*, IV, no. 34, pp. 721-4. Apokaukos, writing soon after these events, mentions 'the arrogant Marquis, whose ships filled the sea and whose horses the plain at Halmyros' (ed. Vasilievsky, no. 26, p. 292, line 14f.).

⁴⁴ San Georgio, (*R.I.S. XXIII*), *Historia Montisferratis*, pp. 374, 381-2. Richard of San Germano says that William died in September 1225 and Demetrios in 1230, at Amalfi.

⁴⁵ Akropolites 11, 33-4. Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, nos. 19 and 20, pp. 279-82. See Wellnhofer, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-8. Akropolites' statement (p. 33) that Theodore severely punished Mesopotamites and sent him into exile conflicts with that of George Bardanes, who says that Mesopotamites left Thessalonike of his own free-will. See Bardanes, ed. Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, pp. 429-32, and Appendix, p. LIII; and see below, p. 95.

⁴⁶ Akropolites 34, Gregoras, I, 26-7. Chomatenos, ed. Pitra, no. 86, pp. 381-90 (letter to Savas, Archbishop of Serbia), no. 114, pp. 487-98 (letter to the Patriarch Germanos II). See below, p. 81. Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 24, pp. 285-6; Meliarakes, p. 164, and Appendix no. V (Text of the synodical resolution). See p. 70.

⁴⁷ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, nos. 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, pp. 282-8. Apokaukos did apparently visit Thessalonike at Easter 1225. See Wellnhofer, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁸ Chomatenos 482 (θεοτεφής αὐτοκράτωρ); 367 (κρατιός αὐτοκράτωρ). Bardanes, ed. Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, Appendix, pp. LII and LIII (θεοτεφής αὐτοκράτωρ), p. LIV (θεοδυνάμωτος αὐτοκράτωρ). Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 26, p. 291, line 32: τὸν ἡμέτερον ἐκ Θεοῦ δεοπότην καὶ αὐτοκράτορα: *ibid.*, no. 29, p. 299. Miklosich and Müller, V, pp. 14-15 (Chrysobulls of Theodore as Emperor, dated 1228). Predelli, *Liber Pleigiorum*, Appendix, p. 184 (text of Theodore's truce with the Latins).

⁴⁹ Akropolites 34.

⁵⁰ Akropolites 58, 66. See below, Appendix on the Petraliphas family, p. 215.

⁵¹ For John Plytos, see above, p. 48. Chomatenos 19, 199, 445. For the office of μεσάλων (described by DuCange as 'rerum ministri in aula imperatoris') see E. Stein, Spätbyzant. Verfassungs- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, *Mitteilungen zur osmanischen Geschichte*, II (1923-6), p. 39.

⁵² Chomatenos 41, 105, 366, 395. Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *I εροσολυμιτική Βιβλιοθήκη*, I, no. 43; *Analecta*, IV, no. 38, p. 119; *Bυζαντινά*, I, p. 8. Akropolites 66, 90. Αχαρουλάριος τῆς μικρᾶς σακέλλης (Michael Berislavos) and a βεστάρχης are also mentioned (Chomatenos 363, 445). The titles of πανσέβαστος and μεγαλεπιφανέστατος were liberally bestowed by Theodore (e.g. Chomatenos 105, 193, 165, 205, 537). See L. Bréhier, *Les Institutions de l'Empire byzantin*, pp. 142-3.

⁵³ See D. Angelov, The question of Theme-governors in the Despotate of Epiros and the Kingdom of Nicaea, *Byzantinoslavica*, 12 (1951), pp. 56-74. Bardanes, ed. P. Kerameus, V.V., XIII, no. 2, pp. 336-8. Chomatenos 105, 107, 205.

⁵⁴ Chomatenos 452, 490. Bardanes, ed. Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, Appendix, pp. LIII, LIV. The Tzakonians of north-eastern Lakonia were employed as garrison troops in the Empire from the tenth century onwards. See E. Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 55; N. A. Bees, *Byz.-neigr. Jahrbuch*, III (1922), p. 244f.

⁵⁵ Akropolites 34. Gregoras, I, 25, 28.

⁵⁶ Michael Akominatos (ed. Lambros, II, p. 329, line 21) addresses Theodore as 'Glory and adornment of the Houses of Komnenos and Doukas, and boast of the Greeks'. Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 17, p. 270, line 30: δῆμοις θεόθεν ἀπεστάλθαι φρονοῦμεν, καὶ βασιλέα τῶν ἡμετέρων ἐπιγραφόμεθα; and no. 27, p. 293, lines 27-30: δῶρον μὲν ἀναμφιδόγως θεού, σωτήριον δὲ τῶν ἐνταῦθει χριστιανῶν,

ἀνακλήτορα πόλεων, συναγαγέα τῶν σκορπιοθέντων, συνδέτην τῶν διεστάτων. Chomatenos 54, 487-98.

⁵⁷ The text of the synodical resolution is in Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 24, pp. 285-6; and in Meliarakes, Appendix 5, pp. 653-4. Many of the phrases echo those of the Silence written by Niketas Choniates for the coronation of Theodore Laskaris in 1208 (see Sathas, *Bibliotheca graeca medii aevi*, I, p. 99f.). The text of the inscription is in Bocckh, *Corpus inscriptionum graecorum*, IV, no. 8750; Hahn, *Albanische Studien*, I, p. 118; Meliarakes, pp. 145-6. Ephraim's description of Theodore (lines 7660-1: γῆγας βριαρόχειρ τις, ὁξεῖς ἐν μάχαις) might well have been inspired by this inscription from Durazzo.

CHAPTER 4

ECCLESIASTICAL REPERCUSSIONS
THE DIVISION OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

THAT the Kingdom of Thessalonike and the Kingdom of Nicaea could never unite towards the common aim of the restoration of Byzantium was taken as axiomatic by the Byzantine historians. Their rivalry was a tragedy, but a tragedy forced on the Greek world by the rebellious attitude of Theodore Angelos against the divinely-appointed authority of the Emperor at Nicaea. There can be no doubt that this rivalry was the main contributory cause of the survival of the feeble Latin Empire, at least after the death of Henry of Flanders. If the armies of Thessalonike and Nicaea could have joined forces instead of treating each other with cold courtesy or open hostility Constantinople might well have been saved many years of Latin rule.¹

The point of view of the western Greeks is nowhere presented by the historians. The claims to sovereignty put forward by Michael Angelos and substantiated by the coronation of Theodore were ignored or obscured by George Akropolites and Nikephoros Gregoras. But to the Greeks of Epiros and Thessalonike Michael and Theodore had as much claim to the title of Emperor as the self-appointed Theodore Laskaris and the upstart John Vatatzes; and Theodore's unwavering nationalism could be contrasted favourably with the overtures made to Rome and to the Latin Empire by Laskaris. The jealousy between the eastern and western Greeks coloured their ecclesiastical as well as their political relations. Those who doubted the sovereignty of the Emperor at Nicaea doubted also the authority of the Patriarch whom he had appointed. For the last Patriarch of Constantinople, John Kamateros, had ended his days not in Nicaea but in Bulgaria; and the man who claimed to have inherited his prerogatives was in fact no more than the Bishop of Nicaea.² There is no unbiased history to right the balance of interpretation in the political sphere. But the surviving correspondence of the hierarchy of the Epirote Church clearly reflects the various stages of the mounting rivalry

and misunderstanding that divided the Greeks during a critical period, and provides material for a very different interpretation of the Despotate from that offered by George Akropolites and his successors.

At the time of Michael's death in 1215 there were still two influential Metropolitan bishops of the Epirote Church who could claim a direct connexion with the Patriarchate of Constantinople, Basil Pediadites of Corfu and John Apokaukos of Naupaktos. Pediadites had been appointed at least as early as 1204, and either stayed in Corfu during the short Venetian occupation of the island or else was reinstated by Michael in 1214. He was invited to attend the Oecumenical Council at the Lateran in 1215, and his curt and sarcastic reply to the Pope has survived. He commented bitterly on the likelihood of any members of the Greek clergy, whom the Pope himself had evicted from their churches and replaced by 'adulterers', accepting such an invitation from Rome; and he questioned the validity of an 'Oecumenical' Council held while the Patriarchal throne of Constantinople was vacant.³ The diocese of Corfu was particularly vulnerable to the influence of the Roman Church and to 'its foolish ideas about the sacraments and the procession of the Holy Spirit'. Pediadites was more concerned to wage verbal war against the Pope and his agents than against the Patriarch of Nicaea. But his wisdom in theological matters was much esteemed by his colleagues. The Archbishop of Ochrida, himself no mean theologian, sought his advice and frequently quoted his judgements on various points of canon law; and his death in 1219 evoked a very flattering obituary from John Apokaukos, in which his learning and his polemics against 'the arrogant Italians' are highly praised.⁴

John Apokaukos of Naupaktos was much more directly involved in the affairs of the Despotate, at least after the accession of Theodore Angelos. Apokaukos was a nephew of Constantine Manasses, the historian, who was Metropolitan of Naupaktos from about 1175 to 1187. In his youth he studied at Constantinople together with the later Patriarch of Nicaea, Manuel Sarantenos. Other friends of his youth were Demetrios Chomatenos, Constantine, the later Bishop of Kastoria, and Iasites, who became Metropolitan bishop of Ephesos about 1220.⁵ He seems to have begun his clerical career in the Monastery of St. Luke at

Stiris. In a letter to the Archbishop of Ioannina towards the close of his life he writes of his intention to end his days within its walls, in his 'spiritual home'; and elsewhere he refers to St. Luke as his 'father'. His connexions with the Monastery appear from the interest that he showed in the fortunes of one of its persecuted brethren during its temporary occupation by the Knights of the Holy Sepulchre.⁶ He served his diaconate under his uncle Manasses at Naupaktos before being transferred to the Patriarchate at Constantinople, where he remained at least until 1199, serving under the Patriarchs Basil Kamateros (1183-87), George Xiphilinos (1191-99), and John Kamateros (1199-1206). It was doubtless during this period that he made the acquaintance of the later Patriarch of Nicaea, Germanos, who was then a deacon of Saint Sophia. The exact date of his preferment to the Metropolis of Naupaktos is not known. Following Constantine Manasses there was a Bishop of Naupaktos called Andrew; and Apokaukos succeeded him some time before the Latin conquest, perhaps about 1200.⁷

Apokaukos was a prolific writer, and his letters form one of the main sources for the history of the Despotate. Among his correspondents was Michael Akominatos, the learned Metropolitan of Athens. In his fervent hatred of the Latins Akominatos could sympathize both with Epiros and with Nicaea. Theodore early invited him to come and reside in the Despotate, and he was also offered a place of refuge in Nicaea. Both invitations he reluctantly refused, for he preferred to end his days on the island of Keos, within sight of his beloved Athens. It was from Keos that he wrote to Apokaukos. The letters exchanged between the two prelates concerned a variety of subjects, both personal and ecclesiastical. Akominatos showed so great an interest in the affairs of the Despotate that the Venetians, who had occupied Keos, suspected him of secret intrigues with Theodore. He once reconsidered the invitation to move to Epiros, and wrote to Apokaukos suggesting that Theodore be approached on the advisability of his transferring his residence to 'a country whose freedom is still, by the grace of God, preserved'.⁸ Apokaukos also kept up an extensive correspondence with his own bishops and with the Despots themselves, and seems to have been on the most friendly terms with Theodore's wife and daughters.⁹

In his position as senior bishop of the Epirote Church Apokaukos soon found himself in an embarrassing situation. The appointment of bishops in Greece was a matter for the Patriarch and the Emperor. The synod over which Apokaukos presided was only authorized to elect bishops from among the candidates nominated by the Emperor himself. There were many practical difficulties to prevent the Patriarch of Nicaea from exercising his proper jurisdiction over Epiros, at least in the early years of the Despotate; and Michael Angelos exploited these difficulties for his own ends. He authorized the appointment of bishops to Larissa and Durazzo in 1212 and 1213 without any reference to Nicaea, and Apokaukos was required, however reluctantly, to give his approval.¹⁰

After Michael's death, as the Despotate grew in size and importance, the need for an authoritative leader of the Epirote Church became more urgent. Theodore was even less ready than his brother to submit to the jurisdiction of the Nicene Emperor and Patriarch; and Apokaukos, as the last surviving Metropolitan in Epiros who had been ordained by a Patriarch at Constantinople, was forced into the position of leading spokesman for the ecclesiastical independence of the Despotate. It was a position that he was never able to accept with equanimity. For while he professed admiration for Theodore's concern for the state of the Church and for his skill in selecting the right men for the right episcopal appointments, he had no wish to sever relationships with the Patriarch. Apokaukos complimented Theodore on the way in which he combined the part of a general with the part of a benefactor and protector of the Church. He was eager to further Theodore's political ambitions at the expense of the rulers of Nicaea, but loth to widen the breach between the clergy of Epiros and the Patriarch of Nicaea.¹¹

Theodore must soon have become aware that he could not count on the whole-hearted support of John Apokaukos in the establishment of an autocephalous Church in Epiros. Apokaukos showed himself violently opposed to the imposition of taxes on his diocese and quarrelled bitterly with Constantine Angelos, Theodore's deputy in Aitolia. Theodore therefore took the opportunities offered by circumstances to appoint for himself other prelates who would be under obligation to him for their preferment, and would support his political aims without reservations.

In 1217 it became necessary to elect a Greek Bishop for the Church of Ochrida. Two years later the Bishopric of Corfu fell vacant on the death of Pediadites' successor. Demetrios Chomatenos was appointed to the See of Ochrida, and George Bardanes to Corfu. Both were known to be scholars and theologians who could match their learning with the clergy of Nicaea; and both were known to be convinced of the fact that Theodore Angelos was divinely ordained to liberate the Greeks from the oppression of the Latins. In neither case was the Patriarch of Nicaea consulted. Their preferment was the work of Theodore himself; and his hopes that their gratitude would serve his political ends were more than realized. The ecclesiastical authority that he required for their appointment he sought not from Nicaea but from Naupaktos. Apokaukos was torn between allegiance to his victorious ruler and deference to the will of his Patriarch. Chomatenos was his personal friend, and he was anxious that the opportunity for his promotion should not be missed. But it was hard for him to reconcile his personal feelings with what he felt to be his duty under ecclesiastical law.

Apokaukos compromised with Theodore and apologized to the Patriarch, salving his own conscience by pointing to the disordered state of the world following the Latin conquest. But once Chomatenos and Bardanes came into prominence in the Epirote Church Theodore no longer lacked churchmen who would champion his claims against both the Emperor and the Patriarch of Nicaea. Demetrios Chomatenos was appointed to the Archbishopric of 'Justiniana Prima and All Bulgaria' by Theodore early in 1217, shortly after his capture of Ochrida, on the recommendation of Apokaukos. He had earlier been Chartophylax of the Church of Bulgaria, and even before his preferment had established his reputation as a theologian. In his exalted position at Ochrida he soon became recognised as a sort of 'Areopagus or oracle of civil and canon law'; and his judgements in ecclesiastical and civil cases were consulted not only by Theodore but also by the ruler of Serbia.¹² His many surviving works and his wide correspondence show that his advice was constantly being sought by all classes of people in all manner of problems; and his rigorous defence of the Orthodox faith against the influence of the Roman Church in Greece was of great assistance to Theodore's cause.

Even on Mount Athos his word was law. When the Georgian monks of Iviron Monastery responded to Latin pressure and accepted the supremacy of Rome, a deputation was sent to Chomatenos for advice, and the Georgians were denounced as traitors and anathematized.¹³

The high opinion that Chomatenos held of his own hierarchical dignity was not without historical justification. The title of 'Justiniana Prima and All Bulgaria' had been adopted by the Archbishops of Ochrida before him. Justiniana had been the family home of the Emperor Justinian; and by an imperial decree of the sixth century, sanctioned by Pope Vigilius, its Archbishop had been granted a certain autonomy in the matter of appointing his own bishops. Justinian placed him third in the hierarchical list, after the Pope of Rome and the Patriarch of Constantinople, a rank which the Patriarch never acknowledged as his right. In later years Justiniana Prima had passed into the larger diocese of Ochrida, which held a relatively inferior place in the hierarchy. But at least by the twelfth century it was assumed that the privileges had passed with the title, and that the Archbishops of Ochrida could claim the prerogatives formerly enjoyed by the Archbishops of Justiniana.¹⁴

The latter half of the title adopted by these Archbishops, 'All Bulgaria', had long since ceased to have any but an anti-quarian meaning. It survived from the period before the Bulgarian settlers in the district of Ochrida had been driven out by Basil II. But it was seriously called into question with the rise of the second Bulgarian Empire after 1186, when the Primacy of Bulgaria was resurrected at Tirnovo and the Bulgarian Church placed under the protection of Rome by Kalojan in 1203. The conquests of the Asen brothers gravely threatened the prestige and the authority of the Church of Ochrida, and the establishment of the Latin Kingdom of Thessalonike was a danger to its very existence. Theodore's victories removed the latter peril and considerably minimized the former; and Chomatenos, confident that his ruler's recovery of much of Bulgarian Macedonia was destined by God, reasserted the autonomy of his Archbishopric on the lines laid down by his immediate predecessors. The fact of the historical continuity of the Bulgarian Primacy and the Archbishopric of Ochrida as separate entities was obscured by

the fiction of the unbroken apostolic succession from Justiniana to Ochrida, a fiction which had, by the time of Chomatenos, become a tradition. The first part of the title to which he was heir, Justiniana Prima, informed the Pope, the second part, All Bulgaria, informed the Patriarch of the independence of his See; while the Archbishops of Serbia and Bulgaria alike were deemed to be rebels against the supposed jurisdiction of Ochrida.¹⁵ For the purpose of Theodore's coronation the fiction was even further magnified, and Chomatenos added to the already distorted picture of his privileges the Papal power of anointing Kings, reputedly granted to Justiniana Prima by Pope Vigilius, and hence a legacy bequeathed to Ochrida.¹⁶

Chomatenos, doubtless encouraged by Theodore, had an even more exalted idea of his position than any of his predecessors. It was clearly his conviction that he, as Archbishop of Ochrida, had a greater claim to the prerogatives of a Patriarch than the Bishop of Nicaea. His subordinates, and even John Apokaukos, regularly addressed him with the titles generally accorded to the Patriarch alone; and the Patriarch at Nicaea sarcastically followed their example. Chomatenos in return honoured all his suffragan bishops with the rank of Metropolitan. He considered himself in fact to be the Primate of an autocephalous Church in an independent state, 'in loco Patriarchi' until such time as Constantinople should be recovered from the Latins; and his correspondence with the Nicene Patriarch is therefore of primary importance in estimating the rival claims of Epiros and Nicaea.¹⁷

George Bardanes was nominated to be head of the Church of Corfu by Theodore and elected at a synod convened at Arta in October 1219. Like his predecessor Basil Pediadites he was particularly concerned with the question of relationships with the Church of Rome; but, so long as Theodore was victorious, he remained a staunch defender of the rights of Epiros and Thessalonike against the Patriarch and the Emperor at Nicaea. His father was perhaps the Bishop of Karystos in Euboia, but he was born in Athens, and studied there under Michael Akominatos, with whom he always continued to correspond. His letters, like all his works, are written in the studied style of which he was a very conscious exponent, and which earned him the title of 'the

Attic'. He became first Recorder (*ἀπομηματογράφος*) and then Chartophylax of the cathedral in Athens. After the Latin conquest he visited Akominatos in Keos and spent some time in Nicaea; and there is evidence for believing that he represented Akominatos at Constantinople in 1213-14 during the visit of the Cardinal-legate Pelagius from Rome.¹⁸

By 1218 Bardanes was in the service of the Epirote Church, attached to the Bishopric of Grevena, though retaining his former title of Chartophylax of Athens. While in Grevena he was proposed by Apokaukos, not from personal acquaintance but on his merits, as a suitable candidate for the vacant Bishopric of Vonitza. He declined to accept nomination, and stated his reasons in a lengthy letter to Naupaktos. The Metropolitan of Athens wished further to observe his progress before he was raised to a bishopric, and he himself was afraid of his inexperience. Apokaukos accepted his refusal, but considered Bardanes to have too modest an idea of his own abilities.¹⁹ In the following year, however, he was nominated for the greater honour of election to the Metropolitan See of Corfu. His name was proposed by Theodore and seconded by the personal recommendation of Michael Akominatos. He could hardly refuse to accept; and he hastened to show his eagerness to Apokaukos in a letter comparing the rude wilds of Grevena with the culture and civilization of Corfu, and the lowliness of his present status with the glories of an episcopal throne. His joy was so unconcealed and his language so rhetorical that Apokaukos felt it his duty to administer a gentle rebuke to this ambitious and sophisticated young cleric. His appointment was made at a synod convened at Arta on the orders of Theodore in October 1219, and Bardanes remained as Metropolitan of Corfu at least until 1235.²⁰

From the succession to the Nicene Patriarchate of Manuel Sarantenos in 1215 the problem of ecclesiastical loyalties in the divided sections of the Byzantine world was increasingly influenced by political considerations. One of Manuel's first acts was to ratify the appointments of Bishops to Larissa and Durazzo made by Michael Angelos. But Theodore soon showed that he was even less concerned to respect the rights of a Patriarch in Nicaea. In the towns that he conquered from the Latins and Bulgarians he appointed clergy with a disregard for canonical

procedure which Apokaukos was hard put to it to justify. On the appointment of Chomatenos to Ochrida in 1217 Apokaukos was obliged to applaud the wisdom of his ruler with one hand while allaying the doubts of his Patriarch with the other. Two years later, with the consent if not the approval of Apokaukos, Theodore appointed one Kostomeres to the newly-recovered diocese of Neopatras. But the election of Bardanes to Corfu strained the relations between the Despotate and Nicaea to breaking-point and once again Theodore was the power behind the ecclesiastical scene. It was he who invited Apokaukos to summon the synod at Arta on 15 October 1219 to appoint a successor for the widowed See of Corfu, suggesting 'if it were permissible for a man of the world to dabble in spiritual matters' the name of George Bardanes; and though he protested that he had no desire to impose his will on the electors, it is clear that his mind was made up. Apokaukos, more cautious than ever, pleaded his ill-health as a means of evading the issue. But he saw to it that the synod was held, even though he himself did not attend. Bardanes was appointed, and the clergy who had elected him met again in December to draft a resolution in justification of their action. This document was intended for the edification of the Nicene Patriarch. Scriptural texts were cited to prove the undesirability of leaving any town or parish in Christendom, for however short a period, without a Bishop at its head. The appointment of Bardanes, necessitated as it was by the prevailing circumstances, could not therefore be construed as a violation of the Patriarchal prerogative. Bardanes on his own already proved merits and on the recommendation of the Metropolitan of Athens was well suited to the dignity conferred on him. The election of so eminently worthy a man to so important a position merely demonstrated the deep concern of the Epirote synod and of Theodore Angelos for the spiritual welfare of the people of Corfu, vulnerable as they were to the sophistries of the Roman Church.²¹

These protestations, however, could not alter the facts. The appointment of Bardanes, following on that of Chomatenos, was a further step towards the complete renunciation of the ecclesiastical authority of Nicaea which the Epirote clergy, coaxed and convinced by Theodore, were later to make. Nevertheless, Apokaukos, who was still the leading figure in the western hierarchy,

continued to make what efforts he could to justify the religious zeal of his ruler to the Patriarch.

As Theodore continued his successful career of conquest in Thessaly and Macedonia the problem became ever more acute. The Epirote synod, under the guidance of Theodore himself, went on appointing priests and bishops of their own choice to the many towns and parishes recovered from the 'barbarians'. Even Apokaukos had to admit that it was impracticable to seek the consent or ratification of the Patriarch at Nicaea for every new appointment; and Chomatenos considered it both unnecessary and undesirable. In places where the Latins had been established the Greek bishops who had held office before 1204 had to be re-instated, or new bishops elected. There could be no compromise with the Roman Church. Theodore's conquests from Bulgaria presented a different problem, since the Bulgarian Church was at least nominally Orthodox. By recognizing the authority of the Pope Kalojan had succeeded in raising his Archbishop of Tirnovo to the status of Patriarch and Papal Exarch. Bulgarian bishops and clergy had since then been appointed in all his provinces. Theodore's invasion of Macedonia raised the question of the validity of these appointments, and the possibility of the Bulgarian clergy being incorporated into the Epirote Church. Chomatenos was sensitive to the implications of this problem, since the Patriarchal claims of the Archbishop of Tirnovo conflicted with his own claims. In 1219 a synod was convened to settle the question. Theodore was represented by the Bishop of Ioannina. To act in accordance with strict canonical procedure was considered offensive, for the Bulgarians were after all brother members of the Church. A compromise was therefore effected. All Bulgarian-speaking bishops were to be removed and replaced by such of the clergy who had formerly been appointed from Constantinople as were still alive. Deacons, priests, and other clerics who had been ordained by those bishops were to remain in office. Chomatenos, who played a large part in the proceedings and wrote a full account to Basil Pediadites, remarks on the barbarity of the Bulgarians as a race and on the imperfections and unsophisticated nature of their language. But he considered the settlement of the Bulgarian Church to be an administrative problem that concerned the Despotate alone. There was no question

of referring the matter to the arbitration of the Patriarch at Nicaea.²²

Early in 1219 Theodore Laskaris, alarmed at the rapid expansion of the Despotate and hoping to forestall his troublesome rival by securing at least a title to the Byzantine throne, had taken as his third wife Maria of Courtenay, daughter of the Latin Empress Yolanda. Towards the end of the same year, prompted by similar motives, he tried to enlist the favour of the Church of Rome by proposing that a Council of Greek and Latin clergy should be held at Nicaea. Invitations were sent out to the Patriarchs of Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem, and legates were to be sent to the Pope to discuss union between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople. The date of the Council was fixed for Easter 1220, and Manuel, the Patriarch of Nicaea, sent letters to Theodore and to Apokaukos asking them to arrange for some Epirote representatives to be present, and expressing the hope that Apokaukos would attend in person.²³

To this proposal the Despotate adopted a firm and uncompromising attitude. Theodore would not join in furthering the interests of Nicaea by coming to terms with the enemies of his own people; and his clergy unanimously supported him in denouncing the treaties and agreements that Laskaris had made with the Latins. The reply to the Patriarch's invitation was composed by Apokaukos. He pointed out that previous Emperors had tried and failed to bring about the union of the Greek and Roman Churches, and that although the experiment might be worth a further attempt there was the danger that it would only increase the power of the Latins at the expense of the Greeks. If the Council were to be held, however, he suggested that it should take place in Greece rather than in Nicaea. For the Greeks of the Despotate, being constantly at war with the Latins, could not make the journey to Nicaea by land or sea without risking their lives. The Greeks of Nicaea, on the other hand, thanks to their treaties and truces with the Latins, could travel in comparative safety to the west and to Rome itself.²⁴

Apokaukos voiced the general indignation felt in Epiros over the marriage of Laskaris to the daughter of the Latin Empress, and bitterly deplored the fact that it had led to an armistice between the Kingdom of Nicaea and the common enemy of the

Greeks. Laskaris had hopes of securing the succession to the throne of Constantinople through Yolanda's daughter, and Apokaukos hints at the fact that he had ceded some territory and paid over a sum of money to achieve this alliance.²⁵ Union with the Roman Church would greatly help towards the fulfilment of these expectations. But such underhand negotiations could only be regarded as treachery by the Greeks of the west, who had so much more cause for bitterness and resentment against the Latins; and the Patriarch himself secretly felt as much disapproval of the proposed negotiations with Rome as he openly expressed with regard to Laskaris' marriage.²⁶ This behaviour on the part of Nicaea was, as Apokaukos remarked, not calculated to improve relations between the already divided sections of the Greek Church; and he concluded his letter with a reproach to the rulers of Nicaea for turning a blind eye to the iniquity and false doctrine of the Latins and for co-operating with them at a time when 'the great Komnenos', far from seeking an understanding, was devoting all his energies to waging unceasing war against them. If one man could effect so much to their detriment, what could not two fighting side by side achieve? But this, as Apokaukos must well have realized, was a purely rhetorical question. For Theodore had no intention of making any concessions whatsoever to Nicaea, least of all that a Laskaris should share in his triumphs.

In the end the proposal came to nothing. The negotiations with Rome fell through, and the Patriarch had to content himself with holding a local Council of Greek clergy only, whose discussions were limited to various points of canon law.²⁷

The mutual jealousy of the two rulers, which effectually prevented any military co-operation between Epiros and Nicaea, contributed to the emergence of a state of schism in the Orthodox Church. The Patriarch was in a difficult position. His influence over the clergy in the Despotate was obviously weak; and its weakness became increasingly apparent when he continued his attempts to enforce his authority and to overrule the independent election of bishops in Greece. Exaggerated rumours soon began to reach Nicaea about the revolutionary activities of Demetrios Chomatenos, and more especially about the unauthorised election of a new Bishop to Larissa on the death of Kalospites. Manuel, the Patriarch, wrote an indignant letter to Apokaukos in February

1222, expressing his concern at the effrontery of his new appointment to Larissa. He recalled the special measures that he had taken to confirm the election of Kalospites to Larissa and of Dokeianos to Durazzo, on the understanding that such uncanonical practices should not be repeated. The report of his synod on this matter had been brought to Apokaukos by the Patriarch's own legate, Constantine Avlenos, and read out to him in the presence of the Bishop of Vonitza and with the full knowledge of Theodore. Nevertheless, despite all the professed loyalty of the western clergy to their Patriarch, news had reached him that another bishop had been appointed to succeed Kalospites. Such flouting of Patriarchal authority he traced to the influence of Chomatenos, 'a Bulgarian bishop, a foreigner, and unacquainted with the discipline of the Church', one whose own preferment had been both illegal and invalid. He advised Apokaukos 'not to play second fiddle to barbarian and hyperborean Christians', but to see to it that the clergy in Greece were nominated and appointed through the normal and legal channels. The waxen seal of officialdom was set to the Patriarch's letter; and the relationship between Manuel and Apokaukos was now bluntly defined as that of Oecumenical Patriarch and subordinate. This was a Patriarchal bull, and there was to be no compromise.²⁸

The bishops of the western Greek church were thus denounced as transgressors, and the ordination of Demetrios Chomatenos, who was fast proving himself a formidable rival of the Patriarch, was declared invalid. Apokaukos, feeling the responsibility of a reply too great for himself, appealed to Theodore for instruction; and the fruit of his appeal, composed no doubt at Theodore's dictation, was his letter to the Patriarch written about April 1222.²⁹ This long and detailed document set out to justify the actions of the western Greek hierarchy in general and of Apokaukos in particular. The tragic circumstances of the time had led to certain anomalies in Epiros no less than in Nicaea; but the dignity and the authority of the Church had been scrupulously upheld. Dokeianos had been elected Metropolitan of Durazzo by Michael Angelos and his bishops 'nine years before'; Kalospites had been appointed to Larissa by the deceased Archbishop of Leukas; and George Bardanes had been made Bishop of Corfu. All three prelates had been nominated and elected on the highest

recommendations, and all because of their undoubted talents. Nor had the See of Larissa changed hands. The rumour that had reached the Patriarch's ears was unfounded. Kalospites had been ill but had recovered, and was again administering the affairs of his own church.

The Patriarch's attacks on the person of Demetrios Chomatenos met with a staunch defence of his character, his ability, and his learning. Chomatenos had been nominated to the Archbishopric of Ochrida 'by our ruler, whom we regard as sent from God and acknowledge as King of our land'. The election had been made at a synod convened by that ruler 'according to the ancient customs of the Church'. If the Patriarch chose to question the validity of candidates nominated for preferment by a ruler other than the Emperor at Nicaea he should reflect that the nomination of bishops by an Emperor was in any case only a matter of personal choice, and added nothing to the dignity or the authority of those appointed.³⁰ Indeed the appointment of Chomatenos was no more uncanonical than that of the Bishops of Alexandria, Antioch, or Jerusalem, none of which had the sanction of the Emperor.

The Patriarch was advised not to busy himself with the domestic affairs of others, and to realize like a prudent man when to bow to the force of circumstances. Political necessity had compelled the western Church to adopt these measures, but what was done under compulsion was neither schismatic nor treacherous. The Patriarch's name was still remembered in the prayers of electors and elected alike; and the only irregularity was that created by the difficulties of communication with Nicaea. The Patriarchs of Nicaea had apparently raised no protests when bishops had been appointed to the Churches of Trebizond or NeoCaesarea, nor in the case of the Metropolitan of Adrianople, who had regulated the affairs of his own Church without reference to any higher authority. Nor had the rulers of the Despotate yet presumed to imitate the example of David Komnenos in Trebizond, who had rejected the Patriarch's nomination of a bishop to the See of Amastris as an infringement of his sovereignty.

Apokaukos was at pains to show that all the bishops who had been elected on the orders of Michael or Theodore Angelos in Greece were men of whose high character the Patriarch could not but approve. Kostomeres, the new Bishop of Neopatras,

had been honoured with the title of Logothete by the Patriarch himself while serving his diaconate in Constantinople; while the other appointments made to the churches liberated by Theodore from the Latins, for instance that of Gorianites to Serres and of the bishop elected to the diocese of Leukas, were no less worthy of the Patriarch's approval. Finally Apokaukos rebuked Manuel for failing to acknowledge the many and invaluable services that Theodore Angelos had performed for the Church, and for condemning rather than commending his care to provide 'shepherds for the flock' in each newly-conquered town. He begged him to recognize the fact that a temporary division in the government of Church and State was inevitable in the circumstances. It was obviously right that there should be only one Emperor for the management of secular affairs and one Patriarch for the management of spiritual affairs. But the Empire was divided amongst itself due to the misfortunes and shortcomings of its people, and the Patriarch was removed from his place of office, with his flock widely scattered and set under different authorities. It was only possible to submit to the will of God in these matters. Yet, though the division in secular affairs seemed irreconcilable, though the rulers of the two separate states of Epiros and Nicaea could not work in harmony to the same end, unity in spirit remained 'even unto death'. Manuel's attempts to interfere in the private affairs of the western Greek Church could in these circumstances only serve to aggravate the 'secular schism'. He was like one who, in his efforts to patch a piece of cloth, simply made the tear wider; and his attitude could lead only to the waging of a sacred war in the body of the Church.

Apokaukos apologized for his own negligence in corresponding with Manuel by appealing to the difficulties and misunderstandings created by his illness. He explained that he had never been properly acquainted with the Patriarch's report confirming the appointments to Larissa and Durazzo; for he had been confined to a sick bed a good three days' journey from Vouitzza at the time when the Patriarchal legate Constantine Avlenos arrived there. All that he had finally heard was a short summary, and he had scarcely time to give any report on the situation in Epiros before Avlenos left again for Nicaea.³¹

The misunderstandings were genuine enough. Some time

afterwards Apokaukos wrote to George Bardanes, lamenting the fact that the almost mortal sickness from which he was suffering when he went down to Vouitzza to meet the 'legates from the east' had made it impossible for him to deal with them effectively. But the personal concerns of Apokaukos could not be used as an excuse for the now almost hostile attitude which the Epirote Church adopted towards the Patriarchate, an attitude that found its justification in Theodore's increasing power and its champion in Demetrios Chomatenos. Apokaukos wrote to his friend Nicholas Gorianites describing the difficulties of trying to reconcile the principle of allegiance to the Nicene Patriarch with the necessity for obedience to the wishes and commands of his ruler Theodore; and it is clear that Apokaukos was more troubled in his mind over this problem than either Bardanes or Chomatenos. But it is significant that the ostentatious signature of 'Oecumenical Patriarch' which Manuel gave to his letter did not pass unchallenged, and that even Apokaukos was prepared to question the adoption by a self-styled Patriarch of so controversial a title.³²

Towards the end of 1222 the Patriarch Manuel died. John III Vatatzes, whom he had crowned Emperor of Nicaea in August of the same year, found himself occupied in securing his authority against the claims of the brothers of Theodore Laskaris, who had enlisted the support of Robert, the new Emperor of Constantinople. The western Greeks were engaged in their campaign for the capture of Thessalonike, to which end the war of Vatatzes against the Franks was, ironically enough, of no little assistance. For a year or more diplomatic relations between the two states were curtailed, and the vexed question of ecclesiastical allegiances hung fire. Both rulers were successful. Vatatzes defeated the Franks at Poimanenon, and Theodore was crowned Emperor at Thessalonike. The synod at Arta which determined on Theodore's coronation had informed the new Patriarch Germanos II of the ecclesiastical consequences. The whole political complexion was now changed. Nikephoros Blemmydes records the convocation of a synod of some forty bishops in Nicaea, at which it was resolved to send a letter to Theodore Angelos advising him to lay aside the purple on the grounds that it was not fitting for men of one race to have two Emperors and two Patriarchs. But such advice was doomed to be ignored. For whatever excuses the

Epirote clergy might invent to appease the Patriarch, the name of the Emperor of Nicaea was never mentioned and the idea of his superiority never entertained.³³

After the coronation of Theodore in 1225, Chomatenos, who by virtue of the part he had played now considered himself and was no doubt generally acknowledged to be the head and spokesman of the western Greek Church, tried to forestall a renewed outburst of Patriarchal indignation with a tactful, if belated, letter of congratulation to Germanos on his elevation to the Patriarchal throne. Despite all the confusions 'brought upon the world by the sins of mankind' he asked for the Patriarch's blessing on the Church of Epiros, which, thanks to the untiring efforts of their Emperor, 'crowned by God', survived and flourished. He concluded with thanks to God that the fortunes of the east were reciprocated by those of the west, that the rulers of both were united in the bonds of a single purpose, and that the spiritual unity of the Church remained unbroken.³⁴

Such words coming from one who had so far usurped the authority of the Patriarch as to crown a rival Emperor could hardly be received with sympathy. Germanos replied in a tone of sarcasm plainly calculated to insult the pride both of Theodore and of Chomatenos. With no acknowledgement of the congratulations offered to him, he went straight to the root of the matter by asking when and whence the clergy of Bulgaria had received the right to crown Emperors of the Romans. From what wild-olive tree could Chomatenos have extracted the sacred oil, and from what tradesman could he have procured the unguent for coronation, whose consecration and use was reserved for the Patriarch? He accused Chomatenos of purposely disrupting the unity of the Church and attempting to excuse his own deliberate deviations from the path of duty by magnifying the anomalies of the political situation. Finally he announced the appointment of the Bishop of Amastris as his legate to Thessalonike to see whether the western Greek clergy really desired the love and spiritual concord of which they talked so much, and to acquaint Theodore with the Patriarch's wishes.³⁵

The Bishop of Amastris was probably the bearer of this letter to Chomatenos; and the fixity of the Patriarch's resolve was further demonstrated by the ordination in Nicaea of a new

Bishop for the See of Durazzo, which was once again vacant. This was by way of a reply to the report drawn up by Apokaukos two years earlier. But the appointment was treated with contempt by Theodore; and though, according to Bardanes, a synod was convened at Thessalonike to hear the Patriarchal legate, nothing was achieved. Theodore proceeded undeterred to run his own Church according to his own choice; and Constantine Kabasilas, known as a friend of Chomatenos, was raised to the Metropolitan throne of Durazzo.³⁶

Meanwhile, Chomatenos, wounded by the Patriarch's answer to his letter, composed an exhaustive defence of the activities of his Church and of his own position and sent it to Germanos.³⁷ After openly and directly declaring that there was now nothing binding the western Greek clergy to the Patriarch except the common tenets of the Orthodox faith, he went on to answer the charges made against him. Theodore, he said, had been legally proclaimed Emperor by the Senate, the hierarchy, and the whole body of the army, and it was resolved that he should be anointed and crowned as a foil to the pretensions of his enemies, who would be daunted by the name and dignity of an Emperor. Chomatenos himself was chosen to perform this ceremony by virtue of the extraordinary powers conferred by Justinian and the Pope on the Archbishopric of Ochrida, which absolved him from the charge of wilfully usurping the prerogatives of the Patriarch.³⁸ Affairs in the west were no more irregular than those in the east. Had not an Emperor been proclaimed and a Patriarch appointed under the stress of circumstances in the province of Bithynia? And what precedent was there for the Bishop of Nicaea to call himself Patriarch of Constantinople? Chomatenos then recapitulated the virtues of Theodore as champion of the nation and of the Church, and as the descendant of illustrious Emperors and heir to the Kingdom now granted him as his due. Concerning the actual ceremony of coronation he cited the canons of the Church to show that there were no special grades of oil such as Germanos had indicated. The oil for every christening did not have to be blessed by the Patriarch. It could be consecrated by any priest. The anointing of Kings was merely a similar 'part of the hierarchical service', and by no means the exclusive privilege of the Patriarch.³⁹ Furthermore the unguent which Germanos had called

in question was not employed in the customary ceremony of coronation; and even if it were the Patriarch could hardly claim that his particular variety was any better than that which 'flows in rivers from the tomb of St. Demetrios in Thessalonike'.

This reply was intended once and for all to impress upon Nicaea not only the justice of Theodore's claims to sovereignty but also the validity of his coronation; and the underlying suggestion was that, while Theodore was the legitimate successor to the Byzantine throne and Chomatenos the heir to an apostolic See second only to that of Constantinople, Vatatzes was little but an upstart and Germanos nothing but the Bishop of Nicaea. It is difficult, however, to understand why Chomatenos should make so much of his supposed prerogatives while admitting that the ceremony of coronation requires no specially privileged priest; and it seems clear that he was doing his best to justify to Nicaea his own assumption of the Patriarchal status which alone was fitting to the dignity of a Kingdom.

It was in this tone that he concluded his letter by accusing the Patriarch of trespassing on the jurisdiction of the See of Ochrida by sanctioning the establishment of an autocephalous Church in Serbia, and by granting to Savas, the brother of Stephen Nemanja, the title of 'Archbishop of All Serbia'. Chomatenos had already written to Savas on this subject in May 1220, addressing him not as an Archbishop but as a monk who had deserted his calling on Mount Athos and become ensnared by worldly ambitions, and protesting that the true Bishopric of Serbia was that of Ras, a dependency of the Church of Bulgaria and hence of the See of Ochrida. But the fact is that the arrangements that resulted in the recognition of an independent Serbian-speaking Church and the coronation of a Serbian King were engineered by Nemanja and allowed by Vatatzes for political reasons, and were as much an infringement on the authority of the Patriarch, who patiently complied with his Emperor's plans, as they were on the territorial claims of Chomatenos, who vigorously protested.⁴⁰

The niceties of the correct coronation procedure were soon forgotten as a point of argument. But Theodore's blunt refusal to accept for the Church of Durazzo the Bishop who had been sent from Nicaea was the clearest indication that the contempt

of Patriarchal authority was a matter of high policy dictated to the western Church by the Emperor of Thessalonike himself. Germanos retaliated with an indictment of all the crimes ecclesiastical and political perpetrated by the Kingdom of Thessalonike and its ruler against the sovereignty of Nicaea, and laid the blame for the 'revolt' of the Epirote clergy directly on Theodore. This document is lost, but its substance can be reconstructed from the reply that was composed by George Bardanes of Corfu. Theodore was the object of a pointed and personal invective. He was accused of hindering the cause of the Greeks, of breaking his oath to Theodore Laskaris, of hounding Constantine Mesopotamites out of Thessalonike and adopting the name of Emperor, and of deliberately promoting a schism within the Church.

The task of answering in the name of 'the western hierarchy' these 'echoes of thunder' from the Patriarchal throne was entrusted to Bardanes. His letter to Germanos is long, bitter, and sarcastic; but its phrasing is studied and elegant, and its rudeness is decently cloaked under a mantle of allegory, mythology, and quotations from the Scriptures. He gave full vent to his literary virtuosity in a general defence of Theodore before proceeding to examine each particular charge in the Patriarch's list of accusations. The Patriarch, he wrote, was ill-advised to attack 'with baneful words' one who was, to the western Greeks at least, divinely ordained as Emperor. The several crimes imputed to him were founded only on prejudice or misrepresentation. Theodore was not guilty of having driven the Bishop of Thessalonike from his Metropolis. Mesopotamites had not been sent into exile by King, clergy, or people. He had followed his own inclination and his own conscience in adopting a wandering existence, and had persisted in his resolve to leave Thessalonike despite the entreaties of Theodore himself and the intervention of his colleagues in the hierarchy and members of the Senate.

The charge that Theodore had been guilty of perjury to Theodore Laskaris was equally misinformed. The oath of loyalty that he had been made to swear when he accepted his brother's invitation to go to Epiros in 1205 was made to Laskaris not as an Emperor, for he was not then crowned, but as a mere adventurer in search of a principality. Had it not been for Theodore's invaluable assistance to him in his early struggles it was doubtful

if Laskaris would ever have succeeded in establishing the capital of his Kingdom at Nicaea.

Finally, with regard to the burning question of the Church of Durazzo, Bardanes was at pains to justify Theodore's attitude. Durazzo was the city that Theodore cherished above all others in his realm, a prize wrested from the Italians by his brother Michael after heroic effort, and retained with no less determination by himself against the obstinate and repeated assaults of an enemy 'more haughty than a pride of lions'. Theodore had expended great quantities of men and money to maintain his hold on this city, and to stave off 'the ravening beasts from Sicily and the denizens of the Adriatic' who lusted after it. It was therefore not unnatural that he should regard as his own right the direction of its affairs. He could hardly be expected to welcome as its Bishop a priest who had never served either in Thessalonike or in any other part of his dominions. But since Durazzo had proved a test case, Bardanes was authorized to state as a principle that for the future no clergy whatever from Nicaea would be allowed to officiate in any quarter of the territory over which Theodore ruled as Emperor. All vacant bishoprics in the west would henceforth be filled by candidates nominated by him and elected by the western hierarchy and their synod according to their own choice and without prior consultation with the Patriarch. Such practice might be considered irregular, but no more so than the irregularities of the times and circumstances in which they all found themselves.

Bardanes ended his letter with a plea for some measure of agreement between the two Kingdoms to recognize each other's independence. Their differences were all too obvious. The western Kingdom was free and tolerant, the eastern harsh and intolerant; the one 'a garden of roses and cypresses, where anyone could enter at will to enjoy the view, to walk, sit, pick flowers, or rest in the shade; the other likewise a Paradise, but marred and made forbidding by its intolerance and unfriendliness'. There could be no real harmony between the lion and the chameleon, but at least there might be peaceful co-existence. Therefore, 'let each come to an understanding on these terms, enjoying his own Sparta and being content with his lot, not casting covetous eyes to the other extremities of the earth, but living in contentment and

brotherly love, fearing God and paying respect each to his own King'.⁴¹

But the Patriarch could accept no such compromise, and the thunder of his disapproval continued to echo round the Kingdom of Thessalonike. Finally, Theodore took the matter into his own hands and openly proclaimed himself defender of the faith in Greece, a position which, once master of Thessalonike and of equal status with the Emperor at Nicaea, he could more plausibly adopt. In the winter of 1225, after the dismal collapse of the Pope's Crusade against him, he convened a second synod at Arta to discuss the situation. He himself was present and dictated the course of the discussion. The findings of this synod were set forth in a brief 'from all the Metropolitans, Archbishops, and Bishops of the west, and from the autonomous Archbpishopric of Bulgaria', which was composed by Apokaukos and sent to Germanos and 'the synod of the eastern Church'. The tone was more moderate than that set by Bardanes and Chomatenos, but the terms were the same. Apokaukos was again anxious to stress that, though the body of the Church might be temporarily divided, it remained one in spirit. But the practical difficulties of the age were insurmountable, and the Patriarch should accept the ecclesiastical as well as the political autonomy of Thessalonike.

The principle formulated by Bardanes was then authoritatively re-asserted. No more clergy were to be sent to Greece from Nicaea because such a practice was 'against the will of Theodore'. It was not conceivable that the Church of Nicaea would unquestioningly accept clergy sent to it from the west. Churches of the western Kingdom might go for long periods 'unshepherded' if no independent action were taken to appoint bishops. Nevertheless, the Patriarch's name was still remembered daily in all churches and monasteries of Greece, on the orders of Theodore himself; and so long as this was the case spiritual unity would ultimately triumph over the problems created by geographical separation. The Patriarch could therefore give his sanction without misgivings to the appointments of bishops already made, as for example in the Churches of Corfu, Leukas, and Pharsala.

Lastly, the members of the synod could not but express their surprise at the Patriarch's reluctance to recognize the full title of Theodore as Emperor. The title was God-given. For Theodore

was of the blood-royal, the descendant of a long line of kings; and the hand of God had plainly directed him to the fulfilment of his destiny. For it was in the name of God rather than by force of arms that he had defeated Peter of Courtenay, and had so been guided towards the crown that was his by right. Again, the arrogant Marquis, whose ships filled the sea and whose horses the plain at Halmyros, had been subjected beneath his feet by God; and it was with God's help that, like a river sweeping the stones before it, he had restored cities to the rule of the Greeks and cleansed the Church from the defilements of the Latins. If then the Latin ruler of Constantinople, the misinterpreter of the faith ($\delta\alpha\zeta\nu\mu\iota\eta\varsigma$), if the Scythian John Asen deserved to be called King, how much more did Theodore, whose claim to the imperium rested on heredity and on justice?⁴²

A time limit of three months, sufficient for a journey to Nicaea and back, was set for a satisfactory reply from the Patriarch. Failing this a veiled threat was thrown out that Theodore might find himself obliged to place his Church under the protection of the Pope. It is this ultimatum, following on the refusal of Apokaukos to join in Nicaea's proposals for discussions with Rome five years earlier, which shows Theodore's intentions in their true light; and however much Apokaukos might stress the difficulties imposed by political circumstances the contradiction remains. The ultimatum was Theodore's, seconded perhaps by Chomatenos, though it is doubtful if any of his clergy, and least of all Apokaukos, would have supported him in any negotiations with Rome. The threat was hypocritical if not dishonest; but in the last resort Theodore may have felt, as did his brother Manuel in later years, that the support of Rome might stand him in good stead *vis-à-vis* Nicaea.

It is significant that Apokaukos was sufficiently concerned at the measures forced on his Church by Theodore to send, simultaneously with this brief, an explanatory and apologetic letter to Germanos; and when he received no reply to send a second letter begging for some acknowledgement, and expressing hopes of some amicable understanding between the two churches in terms that bear little relation to the threats of his synod, and suggest that his personal opinion differed quite considerably from that which he voiced on the authority of his ruler.⁴³

But the breach between Epiros and Nicaea had now been made and categorically affirmed. It could not be healed so long as Theodore remained Emperor at Thessalonike. For the prime responsibility was his. His political independence he had won by his own efforts and asserted by the act of his coronation. Ecclesiastical independence was a necessary corollary, for it was impracticable if not impossible to maintain an autonomous Kingdom while owing allegiance to a foreign Patriarch, as Nicaea had been ready enough to admit in the case of Serbia. The excuse of circumstances and the difficulties of communication might serve for a time, but the break had eventually to come, and if necessary to be fought for and upheld against the doubts of cautious and traditionally-minded clerics like Apokaukos. In this task Theodore found his supporter in Demetrios Chomatenos, a prelate who was prepared to make the most of his prerogatives, and one who was a greater theologian and an abler statesman than any of the Nicene Patriarchs. But Theodore's assertion of complete autonomy, coupled with his claim to be the one true Emperor of the Romans, put the seal for ever on the always remote possibility that the Byzantine world might unite for the recovery of its capital; and though the ecclesiastical schism lasted only a few years, the worldly jealousy between the rulers of Epiros and Nicaea never subsided, and led to the continued existence of the Despotate of Epiros long after it had lost its *raison d'être*.⁴⁴

¹ A part of this chapter appeared as an article in *Byzantium*, 22 (1952), Brussels 1953, pp. 207-28.

² There were even those at Nicaea who had doubts about the authority of their Patriarch. See Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Curriculum Vitae*, ed. Heisenberg, p. 7.

³ Letter to Innocent III, published by Demetrapoulos in 'Εθνογένετον 'Ημερολόγιον, (1870), p. 187, and by Sp. Papageorgiou in 'Ιστορία τῆς Εκκλησίας Κερκύρας', pp. 30-3. The Patriarchate was vacant between February and December 1215. Pediadites did, however, visit Rome at some stage (see Chomatenos 155).

⁴ Chomatenos 399, 400, 430. Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 8, pp. 253-4; no. 13, p. 262 (especially lines 2-10).

⁵ N. A. Bees, Manassis der Metropolit von Naupaktos ist identisch mit dem Schriftsteller Konstantinos Manassis, *Byz.-neogr. Jahrbuch.*, VII (1928-29), pp. 119-30. Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 15, p. 265; ed. P. Kerameus, *V.V.*, XIII, no. 10, p. 351; ed. P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskou*, pp. 248-50, and in *Bessarione*, Fol. II, vol. XI (1905), p. 295f. See Wellhofer, *op. cit.*, and Vasiliev, *History*, pp. 560-1.

⁶ N. A. Bees, 'Η Μονή τοῦ Όστον Δούκα τοῦ Στεφανόπολης', *Byz.-neogr. Jahrbuch.*, XI (1934-35), Abt. IV, pp. 179-92. Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 23, p. 284. Miller, *Latins in the Levant*, pp. 70, 234.

⁷ Apokaukos, ed. Petrides, no. 12, p. 18 (a marriage-contract signed by Apokaukos in the Patriarchate of John Kamateros). See N. A. Bees, *Λέων-Μανούηλ Μακρός*

etc., 'Επετηρίς, II (1925), pp. 131-2. For Andrew (also called Tziros) see documents in P. Kerameus, *Analecta*, I, no. 3, p. 461, and Miklosich and Müller, III, p. 63.

⁸ Akominatos commended to the care of Apokaukos the chapel of St. Nicholas Sozon, a dependency of the Monastery in Keos where he was living. They also exchanged gifts and corresponded over the appointments of George Bardanes to Corfu. Two of Akominatos' nephews, George and Niketas, were in the service of the Despote. See Wellnhofer, *op. cit.*, p. 26. Akominatos, *ed.* Lambros, II, pp. 326, 330, 332, 339, 350. Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, nos. 9 and 10, pp. 254-6.

⁹ Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, nos. 1, 3, 21, pp. 241, 245, 282. Michael Angelos donated some land to the Church of Naupaktos (Apokaukos, *ed.* P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskou*, no. 6, p. 242). Besides his letters, some of which are still unpublished, Apokaukos wrote at least one treatise on the use of unleavened bread in the Sacrament. Sixteen of his Epigrams have survived, all but one written in Constantinople between 1183 and 1195 (*ed.* P. Kerameus, 'Αθηνᾶ, XV (1903), pp. 403-78).

¹⁰ See especially Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 17, p. 270, line 16: πρόθυμος οὐνί εἰμι χειροτονητής, θραδὸς δὲ μᾶλλον περὶ τὰ τοιάτα; and line 20: ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτων οὐτῶν θελόντων. . . . Meliarakes (p. 189) following Sathas and Aravantinos wrongly supposes that Michael conferred on Apokaukos the title of ὑπέρτιμος Ἀρτῆς καὶ Ναυπάκτου καὶ ἔξαρχος Αἰτωλῶν and that the Church of Naupaktos was subordinate to that of Arta after 1204. See Le Quien, *Oriens Christianus*, vol. II, pp. 199-200; Wellnhofer, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-16.

¹¹ See especially Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 3, p. 245, line 24 to p. 246, line 6.

¹² Chomatenos, *ed.* Pitra, cols. 1-2, 709-20. Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 17, p. 272, line 35 to p. 273, line 2. For the date of his appointment, see M. Drinov, Περὶ τινῶν αναγγραμμάτων Δημητρίου τοῦ Χωματηροῦ ἐξ ἀγορικῆς ἐπίφεως, V.V., I (1894), pp. 319-40, II (1895), pp. 1-23. E. Kurtz, in *B.Z.*, IV (1895), p. 175, V (1896), pp. 211-12. P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskou*, I (1907), Introduction. A. Momferratos, in V.V., II (1895), pp. 426-38. For Apokaukos' part in his election, see P. Kerameus, *loc. cit.*, no. 2, p. 233: εγὼ δὲ πάντων ἀποδοκιμάσας τὰς δόξας σὲ τὸν ἐμὸν παρῆγον Δημητρίου, γνωστὸν μὲν ἐμοὶ πρὸ πολλοῦ. . . .

¹³ Chomatenos 245-50. His other works include answers to the dogmatic problems of Constantine Kabasilas, Bishop of Durazzo, and of Stephen Radoslav of Serbia; treatises on the duties of Greek clergy with regard to the performance of the Roman ritual; three epistles to Rome and Venice on the use of unleavened bread in the Sacrament, and another on fast-days and the celibacy of the clergy (*ed.* Pitra, cols. 617-784). See also P. Kerameus, *Bulgariā* 'Ανάλεκτα, *B.Z.*, VIII (1899), pp. 75-6; Krumbacher, *Geschichte der Byzantinischen Literatur*, pp. 607, 611.

¹⁴ See Zeiller, *Le Site de Justiniana Prima*, in *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, vol. I (Paris 1935), pp. 299-305. V. N. Zlatarski, *Prima Justiniana* im Titel des Bulgarischen Erzbischofs von Achrida, *B.Z.*, XXX (1929-30), pp. 484-9. Chomatenos' own letter to the Patriarch (*ed.* Pitra, col. 495) states his own views on the subject.

¹⁵ Zlatarski, *op. cit.* Letters of Chomatenos to Savas, Archbishop of Serbia (*ed.* Pitra, no. 86, cols. 381-90), and to the Patriarch Germanos (no. 114, col. 496: μέρος γὰρ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς ἐπαρχίας ὁ Τέρρος).

¹⁶ Gregoras, I, 26-7, remarks on Justinian's privileges, which, he says, made Ochrida independent 'except in the matter of crowning Kings'.

¹⁷ Chomatenos was addressed as παναγιώτατε δέσποτα or μακαρώτατε ἀρχιεπίσκοπε. See, e.g., Chomatenos 319, 341, 369, 417, 429, 483; Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, nos. 3 (p. 245, line 35), 17 (p. 272, line 13), and 26 (p. 288, line 23). He addressed his bishops as ἵεροταρος and ἵερότης, not as θεοφιλέσταρος, (Chomatenos 67, 71, 301, 310, 536). See H. Gelzer, *Der Patriarchat von Achrida*, pp. 16-18, 181-3.

¹⁸ Michael Akominatos, *ed.* Lambros, II, 624-5. Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 5, p. 248; *ed.* Petrides, no. 28, p. 28. Meliarakes (p. 199) suggests that he was born in Egypt, but see Lambros, *op. cit.*, p. 350f. (τῆς ἐνεγκούσης αὐτὸν (Βαρδάνη) καὶ λαχούσης ἐμέ ('Αθήνας)). For his visit to Constantinople, see below, p. 116.

¹⁹ Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, nos. 5 and 6, pp. 248-52; *ed.* Petrides, no. 28, pp. 28-9.

²⁰ Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, nos. 7, 9, 11, 13, 17, pp. 252-5, 256-8, 260, 270 (lines 26-30). Another Bishop seems to have succeeded Pediadites for a short time (*ibid.*, no. 7, p. 252, lines 16-18). Apokaukos, *ed.* P. Kerameus, V.V., XIII, p. 351, refers to Bardanes as ῥὸ τῶν χειρῶν ἐμῶν ἐργον. He wrote a number of treatises. For his discussions with the Franciscans, see below, p. 116. In a work on the Procession of the Holy Spirit he mentioned a visit that he made to Rome, during which he saw the silver plaque before the relics of St. Paul on which the Creed was inscribed without the 'filioque' clause. Also among his works are thirty iambic verses, said to have been composed for his own tomb. See Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, pp. 437-8, and Appendix, pp. XLIX-L. Marmora, *op. cit.*, pp. 198-200. Papageorgiou, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-9. For his visit to Italy in 1231-1232, see below, p. 115-117.

²¹ Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, nos. 2, 3, 7, 8, 13, pp. 243-4, 245, 252-3, 253-4, 260-3. For the date of Bardanes' appointment (wrongly given by Meliarakes as 1220) see Wellnhofer, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

²² Niketas 837. Akropolites 18-19. Theiner, *Vetera Monumenta Slavorum*, I, pp. 20-8, 39. Chomatenos 39-48, 563-70. See P. Nikov, *Deux Sources de l'Histoire bulgare*, *Spisanie na Bulgarskata Akademija*, 20 (11) (1921), pp. 1-62. Jireček, *Bulgaren*, p. 237. Zlatarski, *Istoria*, pp. 174-80 and 182-4. Bardanes elsewhere mentions the strong Bulgarian influence in the north of Greece in this period (Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 5, pp. 248-50).

²³ Akropolites 33. Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 14, p. 264.

²⁴ Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 15, pp. 265-7, written about January 1220. See Wellnhofer, *op. cit.*, p. 51. Laskaris had signed a commercial treaty with Venice in August 1219, and Venetian merchant ships had free access to the ports of Epiros. See above, p. 60.

²⁵ Apokaukos, *ibid.*, p. 266, line 35: γίνωσκε, δέσποτα, ὡς μεγάλην πάσας ψυχᾶς τῶν ἐνταῦθα χριστιανῶν τὴν θυμηδίαν ἐνεποίησατε τοῖς Λατίνοις κηδεύσαντες καὶ παρὰ τοῦτο τὴν κατ αὐτῶν ὄρμην παρέδασαντες; p. 267, line 19: δόσεις χωρῶν, χρημάτων καταβόλαιον. Philip Mouskes 23009-12. See Norden, *Papstium und Byzanz*, p. 344; Wellnhofer, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

²⁶ Akropolites 33: μηδὲ δῶλα τῇ τοιάτῳ ἀθεσμογαμίᾳ συγκατανεύοντος.

²⁷ Mansi, *Conciliorum amplissima Collectio*, XXII, col. 1138. Ralles and Potles, *Synagma*, V, pp. 115-16. Among those present at this Council was Romanos, Bishop of Durazzo, who must have held a purely nominal appointment at Nicaea.

²⁸ Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 16, pp. 268-9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 17, pp. 270-8.

³⁰ Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 17, p. 273, lines 14-17: ἐστι δε ἡ ἐκ βασιλέως προχείραιος . . . μόνον γνωριστικὴ τῆς τῶν προσώπων ἐπιλογῆς, οὐδὲν δέ τι πλέον συμβαλλουμένη τῆς ἐπισκοπικήν τελειότητα. See also Chomatenos 631-2, quoted below, p. 102, note 44.

³¹ Apokaukos, *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 17, p. 270, line 24 to p. 271, line 11.

³² Apokaukos, *ed.* P. Kerameus, V.V. XIII, no. 9, p. 349; *ed.* Petrides, no. 25, p. 26; *ed.* Vasilievsky, no. 17, p. 271, lines 5-22.

³³ Nikephoros Blemmydes, *ed.* Heisenberg, *Curriculum Vitae*, 14-15.

³⁴ Chomatenos 481-4.

³⁵ Chomatenos 484-6.

³⁶ Bardanes, *ed.* Mustoxidi, *Delle Cose Corciresi*, Appendix, p. lvi. For Constantine Kabasilas, see Thalloczy, Jireček, Sifflay, *Acta et Diplomata Albaniæ*, I, 51, and Chomatenos, *ed.* Pitra, cols. 617-86.

³⁷ Chomatenos 487-98.

³⁸ See especially Chomatenos 489: προκεκριθμένης ἡμεῖς γνάμη πάντων ἱερουργῆσαι, ὡς τὴν ὑπεροχὴν ἔχοντες ἀπὸ τῆς τοῦ καθ' ἡμᾶς ὅρον μεγαλειότητος.

³⁹ Chomatenos 493: . . . μέρος τῆς τελετουργίας τῆς ἱεραρχῆς.

⁴⁰ Chomatenos 381-90, 495-6. The dependence of Ras on Ochrida was established by Samuel of Bulgaria, and ratified by Basil II in May 1020. See H. Gelzer, *Ungedruckte und wenig bekannte Bistümerverzeichnisse*, *B.Z.*, II (1893), p. 41f. Jireček, *Serbia*, I, pp. 298-9.

⁴¹ Bardanes' letter is published only by Mustoxidi, *Delle Cose Corciresi*, Appendix pp. L-LVI.

⁴² Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 26, pp. 288-93.

⁴³ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 27, pp. 293-5.

⁴⁴ Among the bishops known to have been appointed on Theodore's orders between 1223 and 1230 are Constantine Kabasilas to Durazzo (from Tiberiopolis, see P. Kerameus, *Bυζαντινά Ανάλεκτα*, B.Z., VIII (1899), p. 76, and L. Petit, in *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique russe à Constantinople*, VI (1900), p. 96); John to Vonița in 1227 (see Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Bυζαντινά Ανάλεκτα*, I (1909), p. 26); Manuel Makros to Bellas (see Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamianskoum*, no. 4, p. 237); Eustathios to Acheloos (Apokaukos, ed. Petrides, no. 13, p. 18); and the Bishops of Leukas and Pharsala (Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, p. 290, line 17). Chomatenos in one of his treatises (ed. Pitra, cols. 631-2) summarizes the duties and prerogatives of the Basileus with regard to the organization of the Church: ὁ βασιλεὺς γὰρ οὐα κοινὸς τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν ἐπιστημονάρχης . . . καὶ συνοδικαῖς γνόμαις ἐπιστατεῖ . . . καὶ πρὸς τε κυρεωσαν ψῆφοις ἐκκλησιῶν . . . αὐγεῖ δὲ καὶ απὸ εἰλαττονος τιμῆς εἰς μεῖζον, δηλαδὴ ἀπὸ ἐπισκοπῆς εἰς μητρόπολην, ἡ ἀνδρὸς ἀρετὴν ἡ πόλιν τιμῶν . . . πλὴν μόνον τοῦ ἕρων γενέν, τὰ διαιτά ἀρχιερατικὰ προνόμια σαφέως ἀκονίζει ὁ βασιλεὺς, 'εφ' οἰς πράττει νομίμως τε καὶ κανονικῶς.

CHAPTER 5

THEODORE ANGELOS,
EMPEROR OF THESSALONIKE

1225-30

In the year of Theodore's coronation as Emperor at Thessalonike the Latin Empire of Constantinople was almost confined to the walls of its capital. The Morea and some of the Aegean islands remained under Latin control, and Venetian ships maintained communications. The victory of John Vatatzes at Poimanenon had led to the conquest by Nicaea of almost all the Latin possessions in Asia Minor; and for a few months the Kingdom of Nicaea extended into Europe as well. The citizens of Adrianople appealed to Vatatzes to rescue them from their Latin oppressors, and a Nicene army under Ises the Protostrator and John Kamytzes crossed the Dardanelles, pillaged the district of Gallipoli, and marched north. Adrianople fell to Nicaea.

The Latin Emperor, Robert of Courtenay, could do nothing to prevent the break-up of his Empire. But his position in Constantinople could still be saved. The walls of the city were almost impregnable, and there was no fear of a combined attack from his enemies. The hostility that had been engendered between Thessalonike and Nicaea by Theodore's activities made it impossible for the Greeks to join forces for the recovery of their capital at this critical moment; and there was a third claimant for the prize of Byzantium, whose intentions were still far from clear. John Asen of Bulgaria, the son of the first Asen, had reclaimed his patrimony from his cousin Boril in 1218. Though not by nature a world conqueror like Kalojan, Asen successfully knit together the remnants of his Empire round its capital at Tirnovo. His principal enemy in the west was Theodore Angelos, but in the east he had little to fear; and as the Latin power in Constantinople was progressively weakened John Asen became heir to the ambition which had inspired his uncle. On the ruin of the Latin Empire there might be built up a great Orthodox Empire with Bulgaria as its leader and Constantinople as its capital. Meanwhile he waited his opportunity to side either with

the Greeks or with the Latins for the fulfilment of his dream. Constantinople was threatened simultaneously by Bulgaria, Thessalonike, and Nicaea. It was to be saved by the mutual suspicions of its potential conquerors.¹

The greatest danger came from Thessalonike. In the spring of 1225 Theodore quickly occupied all the places in eastern Macedonia and Thrace which the Latins had been forced to abandon. Tactfully avoiding the district of Melnik, where his distant relation Alexios Slav still held sway, he marched east from Serres along the Via Egnatia and occupied the towns of Kavalla (Christoupolis), Xanthi, Gratziana (Gratianopolis), and Mosynopolis in the plain of Komotini. From Makri he led his army over the mountains of Stagira as far north as Didymoteichos. The occupation of Adrianople by an army from Nicaea, which had taken place only a few months before, was not to be tolerated by the victorious Emperor of Thessalonike. From Didymoteichos Theodore marched north over the Maritza river and encamped outside the walls of Adrianople. Realizing that the inhabitants wanted nothing from Nicaea but protection against the Latins Theodore offered them liberal promises of added prosperity and even greater protection if they would dismiss the army of Vatatzes. They were duly impressed by his offer and opened their gates to his army. Theodore swore to do no harm to the Nicene commanders Ises and Kamytzes but to give them free passage back to Nicaea; and Adrianople changed hands without loss of blood. This was the first but by no means the last occasion on which the armies of Thessalonike and Nicaea met. The only sign of hostility was provoked by John Kamytzes, who refused to dismount from his horse and do obeisance to Theodore as King. This lack of respect so wounded the susceptibilities of Theodore that he rained abuse on the offender and was only with difficulty restrained from violating his oath towards him.²

The peaceful conquest of Adrianople brought Theodore's army within striking distance of Constantinople. The event was marked by hurried diplomatic negotiations on the part of all the interested powers. Theodore himself decided that the time had come to secure his position in Thrace by making an alliance with John Asen of Bulgaria. The marriage was arranged between his brother Manuel and Asen's illegitimate daughter, Maria Belo-

slava. His Macedonian and Thracian acquisitions, which had a common frontier with Bulgaria, were thus insured against attack, and Theodore could count on the encouragement if not the assistance of John Asen against the Franks. Meanwhile, the Latin Emperor, Robert of Courtenay, hastily came to terms with Theodore's rival in Nicaea, and patched up a treaty with John Vatatzes on the basis of exchange of territory, which brought the northern boundaries of the Kingdom of Nicaea within sight of Nikomedea. Negotiations for the marriage of Robert to the princess Eudokia, which had fallen through on the death of her father Theodore Laskaris in 1222, were also reinstated, but came to nothing; and Eudokia soon afterwards married one of Robert's barons, Anseau of Cahieu. Theodore, however, continued his attacks into Latin territory undeterred, penetrating as far as the towns of Bizye and Brysis and even to the gates of Constantinople itself. His army devastated and looted the outlying suburbs and terrified the defenders. Anseau of Cahieu, the first baron of the Latin Empire, who was in command of the garrison, was struck in the neck by a stray arrow, and received a wound that permanently affected the pitch of his voice.³

But the strength of the city's walls saved the day for the Latins. Theodore was not prepared for siege operations and was soon forced to withdraw. In the summer of 1225 news reached him that William of Montferrat and his Italian army had landed in Thessaly, and he hurried back to his capital. But the 'Crusade' for the recovery of Thessalonike perished in the plain of Halmyros, and the threat from the west was at an end. Theodore was undisputed master of the Kingdom of Thessalonike. There was no power on the scene that could challenge his claim to the title of Emperor of the Romans; and the synod that he convened at Arta in the winter of the same year proclaimed to Nicaea, Bulgaria, and Constantinople that Theodore Angelos Komnenos Doukas was the lawful successor to the throne of Byzantium.

Between the years 1226 and 1228 Theodore seems to have remained in his capital, seeing to the administration of his Kingdom and making preparations for the final assault on Constantinople. Among the documents which date from this period are two chrysobulls bearing his signature as *πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ρωμαίων*. The first, issued in May

1228, concerned the restoration of privileges and immunities to the Metropolis of Naupaktos.⁴ The second, signed in the following month, rewarded George Bardanes for his loyalty by guaranteeing the ancient rights and privileges of the Church of Corfu, which had been successively renewed by the Emperors Manuel and Alexios Komnenos and again by Alexios III.⁵ Theodore also confirmed the status of the colony of refugees that had been settled in Ioannina by his brother Michael at the time of the Latin conquest. The document has not survived, but it is mentioned in a further confirmation signed by John Apokaukos in 1232, after an attempt had been made by the native inhabitants of Ioannina to evict the settlers and to seize the property which had been somewhat arbitrarily allotted to them and their descendants by Michael I.⁶

During the same period the action of Theodore's governor in Corfu provoked an unfortunate quarrel with Venice. The Venetians seem to have found it convenient to prolong the five-year treaty which the Pope had obliged them to make with Theodore in 1218, and abandoned attempts to conquer the territory in Epiros that was still nominally theirs. But their merchants continued to carry on a profitable trade in Corfu and the ports of the mainland, and provided a steady source of revenue in taxes and duties. Their indignation was aroused, however, when the governor of Corfu, acting in accordance with the Byzantine 'ius naufragii', seized the cargo and property of one Marco Minotto, whose ship had been wrecked on the shores of the island in June 1228, while he was on his way from Andradiva to Venice. As a result of this incident all commerce between Venice and Epiros was abruptly suspended. Two months later an edict was issued forbidding all Venetian merchantmen from delivering or receiving goods in Theodore's territory; and relationships were not re-established until the time of his successor.⁷

Almost simultaneously, however, the opportunity arose for Theodore to pay his respects to a western ruler whose friendship was more to be prized than that of Venice. The Emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen, ruler of Germany and of the Kingdom of Sicily, left Brindisi at the end of June 1228 on his long-deferred Crusade to the Holy Land, and broke his journey at Corfu and

Cephalonia. The Count of Cephalonia, Maio Orsini, although he had cautiously shifted his loyalties from one great power to another as circumstances dictated, had always been a vassal of the Kingdom of Sicily. But he had also thought it prudent to make his peace with the victorious Emperor of Thessalonike, and had recently taken Theodore's sister Anna to wife. This, the first of many alliances between Epirote Greeks and Italians, gave Theodore and his successors at least a nominal interest in the affairs of Cephalonia.⁸

Frederick II was known to be hostile to the Latin Empire and sympathetic to the Greeks. But only the year before he had been left a title to the Kingdom of Thessalonike by Demetrios of Montferrat. It had been a matter of policy for his predecessors in Sicily to include the Epirote coast and the island of Corfu among their possible objects of conquest; and troops from Sicily seem to have attacked Durazzo more than once.⁹ Frederick's friendship would be a valuable asset as well as a diplomatic safeguard, and Theodore rose to the occasion. Frederick arrived in Cephalonia in the summer of 1228 to be greeted by a magnificent embassy of nobles armed with gifts from the court of Thessalonike; and on his return to Italy in October 1229, he was glad to accept material proof of Theodore's good will through the offices of Maio Orsini, who led a company of Greek soldiers to help in the defence of the Kingdom of Sicily. A month later Theodore strengthened the bond by sending ambassadors to Frederick's court with yet more gifts, including 'golden trappings and harness, vestments of cloth of gold, and innumerable gold coins'. He thus achieved the honour of being the first Greek to enter into diplomatic relations with the German Emperor, a privilege for which he paid by sharing with him the anathema of Pope Gregory IX. These incidents and exchanges of courtesy were the prelude to the more practical interest that Frederick's successors were to show in the affairs of Epiros.¹⁰

Meanwhile events in the east seemed to be contributing to the fulfilment of Theodore's ambitions. Early in 1228 the Latin Emperor Robert of Courtenay had died in the Morea while on his way to Rome. The throne passed to his brother Baldwin, then eleven years old. The Dowager Empress Maria died shortly afterwards, and the question arose of appointing a regent. The

first to offer his services was John Asen of Bulgaria. On condition that the regency should be placed in his own hands Asen proposed that his daughter Helen should become the wife of the young Baldwin. He then offered to meet all the expenses of the Latin Empire and to recover all the territory recently acquired by Theodore Angelos. To accept such a proposal would amount to selling the Empire to Bulgaria, and the electors in Constantinople not unnaturally turned it down, on the grounds that the regent must be a Frank. Finally, by consent of the barons and with the encouragement of the Pope, a suitably bellicose and resourceful candidate was found in the person of John of Brienne. Baldwin was to marry his daughter and cede to him the crown of Constantinople until he attained his majority. John of Brienne was eighty years old, but age had not sapped his energy. His reputation as a warrior had been established in the course of the Fifth Crusade; and it was a warrior that the Latin Empire needed. His appointment as regent was ratified in April 1229, but he had first to settle his own accounts with Frederick II, who had dispossessed him of his title to the Kingdom of Jerusalem three years before.

The proposal of John Asen and its rejection by the barons of the Latin Empire had various repercussions. Asen himself, like his uncle Kalojan before him, considered that the presumptuous Latins had slighted his dignity by refusing his well-intentioned offer. If he could not enter Constantinople in peace he would find the opportunity to enter it by force. Theodore, on the other hand, might well doubt whether the proposal was strictly consonant with the terms of the alliance between Bulgaria and Thessalonike. Narjot of Toucy, who was acting as 'baillie' of the Latin Empire pending the appointment of a regent, desperately tried to play off his enemies one against the other by signing in the name of his barons a truce of one year with Theodore, dated 11 December 1228, but operative as from 14 September. By this means he hoped not only to avert the imminent threat of attack from Adrianople, but also to thwart the righteous indignation of Bulgaria. For an agreement with Theodore, who now regarded his Bulgarian ally with the utmost suspicion, might stand the Latin Empire in good stead should Asen decide to satisfy his resentment in action.¹¹

The truce was observed and ran its course. But Constantinople was still without an Emperor. John of Brienne had rashly invaded Apulia to revenge himself on Frederick II for the loss of his Kingdom of Jerusalem. Frederick hurried back from Palestine in 1229, defeated his enemy, and forced him to take refuge in France. The arrival of the new regent in Constantinople seemed indefinitely delayed. The capital of the Latin Empire was without adequate defence and without a competent ruler. Some of the barons had even proposed abandoning it altogether on the death of Robert of Courtenay. Theodore's preparations were complete by the end of 1229, and the moment was opportune. It was ironical that the regent-Emperor of Constantinople should at that moment have been engaged in fighting Frederick II; for Frederick was almost as much an enemy of the Latin Empire as Theodore himself. The help that Theodore and his son-in-law Maio Orsini had sent to the Kingdom of Sicily in 1229 did not pass unnoticed; and Frederick was glad to return the favour by supporting Theodore's efforts to forestall the arrival and thwart the claims of John of Brienne in Constantinople. So it was that the army with which Theodore opened his fateful campaign from Adrianople was increased by a company of Italian auxiliaries, in token of Frederick's gratitude and the common interests of the Kingdoms of Sicily and Thessalonike.¹²

In the spring of 1230 all seemed ready for the final battle which would restore Byzantium to the Greeks. With the army that he led out from Thessalonike Theodore might have marched again to the gates of Constantinople and tried his strength against the weakness of the Latin Empire with every hope of success. Instead, contrary to all expectations, he turned north into Bulgaria. The reasons that prompted him to make this sudden diversion are shrouded in mystery. The historian of Nicaea, George Akropolites, seizes the occasion to denounce once again the treachery and perfidy of Theodore, laying the blame for the disaster that was to overtake him on his own rashness, ambition, and general instability of temperament. But, as has been observed, such a denunciation, inserted in an otherwise detailed account of the events, suggests that the historian, in his eagerness to find cause for calumny, has obscured the facts of the case. Theodore was an ambitious man, but he was also an experienced

general whose army had not yet tasted defeat. Confident in his superior strength he chose to postpone the assault on Constantinople until he had disposed of an enemy who had already shown himself a dangerous rival. John Asen's overtures to the Latins had strained Theodore's friendship. To secure his flank against so uncertain an ally was a matter of strategic policy and not merely of reckless megalomania. The strength of Constantinople lay not in the number of its defenders but in the thickness of its walls; and to conduct a long siege within striking distance of the Bulgarian army would have been rash. Theodore's motives are open to conjecture. But the fact remains that his unpredictable invasion of Bulgaria at this critical stage proved his own undoing, and marks a turning-point in the history of the Despotate.¹³

Crossing back over the Maritza from Adrianople he marched west along its valley, no doubt intending to strike north across the mountains for Tirnovo. In his certainty of victory he assumed that any Bulgarian resistance would melt at the mere sight of his army. But his assumption proved false; for John Asen, hastily collecting a company of his Cuman mercenaries not more than a thousand in number, hurried south to repel the invader. The armies met in April 1230 at Klokotnitza on the road to Philippopolis. Asen, fired more by the justice of his indignation than confidence in his numbers, went into battle with Theodore's oath of alliance pinned to his standard. The hitherto invincible army of the Kingdom of Thessalonike suffered a disastrous defeat. Theodore himself was taken prisoner together with many of his officers, and the whole of his equipment was given over to the plunder of the Cuman and Bulgarian soldiers. Asen allowed nearly all the common soldiers and lower ranks among his captives to go free and return to their homes, there to broadcast the charity and clemency of the great Bulgarian King.¹⁴

Theodore's army, flushed with its years of uninterrupted success, came to grief; and bereft of its leader the ill-prepared Kingdom of Thessalonike quickly succumbed and sank to a less pretentious level. The Latin Empire had been saved by the ruler whose services it had spurned, and the western Greeks were no longer serious rivals either of Bulgaria or of Nicaea for the prize of Constantinople. Theodore himself, though honourably treated by his captor, still could not contain his restless spirit. He was

found guilty of conspiracy and blinded, a punishment which silenced him for another seven years, and which Gregoras characteristically describes as the vengeance of God on one who, in defiance of the lawful Emperor of the Romans at Nicaea, proclaimed himself King, and on his fellow-countrymen, already reduced to the utmost misery by Franks and Bulgars, brought nothing but disaster and bloodshed.¹⁵

The defeat of Theodore threw the Kingdom of Thessalonike into confusion. John Asen quickly seized his opportunity to restore the lost dominions of the Bulgarian Empire; and before the lightning advance of his armies Theodore's Macedonian strongholds and all the territory that he had conquered from the Latin Empire fell without resistance. In the space of a few months Didymoteichos, with the whole of the southern part of the Maritza valley, Xanthi, Serres, Pelagonia, Ochrida, Prilep, and Devol had passed again into Bulgarian possession, and Asen's authority was recognized from Thessaly to the Albanian coast.

Asen was tactful and charitable in the prosecution of his victory. It was good policy to respect the feelings of his new Greek subjects. In most of the towns he captured he set up his own military governors and officials, but in several cases he exercised his discretion in favour of the existing Greek governors, and allowed them to remain in office. Akropolites makes much of his humanity and friendliness towards the Greeks, which contrasted strangely with the savagery of his predecessors, and won him the affection of Greeks and Bulgars alike; and there is no doubt that the rumour of his generosity encouraged the ready submission of his enemies. But to magnify the virtues of a Bulgarian king served the purpose of Akropolites in dyeing with a deeper black the vices and crimes of Theodore.¹⁶

Klokotnitza decided the fate of the Kingdom of Thessalonike but not of the Despotate of Epiros. Theodore fell at the height of his career, and the Kingdom which he had only half created struggled on for some sixteen years under the watchful eyes of Bulgaria and Nicaea. But the heritage of Theodore's ambition was bequeathed to his nephew, Michael II Angelos; and the transient glories of the Kingdom of Thessalonike were to be remembered for many generations to come on the soil of Epiros.

¹ Akropolites 38. Gregoras, I, 27-8. For John Asen, see Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, pp. 523-4 and references; Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, p. 387.

² Akropolites 38-41. Ephraim 8023-37. For the capture of Christoupolis, see Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 18, p. 279; and Job, ed. Migne, cols. 905-6 B. John Kamytzes was later honoured for his unswerving loyalty to Nicaea with the title of Hetairiarches.

³ Akropolites 41. Ephraim 8038-45. Philip Mouskes 23195-6. Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 161-2. Bizye (the modern Vize) lies midway between Adrianople and the capital. Brysis is described as being 'supra Constantinopolim prope Bizam' (Tafel, *Symb. crit. geog. byz.*, II, p. 112).

⁴ Apokaukos, ed. Vasilievsky, no. 29, pp. 296-9. See above, p. 56.

⁵ First published (with facsimile, etc.) by C. Biagi, *Monumenta Graeca et Latina ex Museo Jacobi Nanii*, (Rome 1786), and later by Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, Appendix, pp. lvi-vii, and pp. 439, 689; Miklosich and Müller, V, 14-15. The stele on which the decree is inscribed is in the *Museo Archeologico in Rome*. See Z. von Lingenthal in *Bulletino dell. Comm. archiol. communale*, anno IX (ser. 2, 1881), pp. 189-96, and anno XI (1883), pp. 1-4. See also P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (1953), no. 4, pp. 408-9, notes 14, 15, 16. The privileges were to be shared with the 'Theme of Vagenetia' on the mainland.

⁶ See P. Kerameus, *op. cit.*, Δελτον, III (1891), pp. 451-5; and M. Dendias, *op. cit.*, *Atti VIII Congresso Int. di Studi bizantini*, II (1953), pp. 302-6. Theodore's decree is described as a βασιλικός θρησκός. The document is dated March indication 5, which Kerameus took to be 1217 on the grounds that Apokaukos was dead by 1232. But see Dendias, *op. cit.*, p. 305, and see below, Appendix II, p. 221. Theodore is also known to have made gifts to the Monastery of Xenophontos on Mount Athos. L. Petit, *Actes de Xenophon*, V.V., X (1903), no. II, Appendix I, p. 30.

⁷ Liber Plegiorum, ed. Predelli, p. 148, fol. 91 (10 June 1228); p. 153, fol. 94 (19 August 1228).

⁸ Ernoul 460. Philip Mouskes 25325-50. Alberic of Trois Fontaines 938. Romanos, Γρατιανός Ζώρζης, pp. 129-30. Maio's marriage to Anna probably took place in 1227. The Latin Archbishop of Cephalonia, Benedict, affirmed his loyalty to Maio and his wife in April 1228. This document (in Greek) bears the seal of Apokaukos of Naupaktos, and shows the close connexions of Cephalonia with the Kingdom of Thessalonike at this time. See N. A. Bees, *Ein politisches Treubekentnis von . . . Kefalonia*, *Byz.-neugr. Jahrbuch*, III (1922), i, pp. 165-76.

⁹ See Bardanes' letter to the Patriarch Germanos, above, p. 96.

¹⁰ Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia Diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, vol. I, pp. 898-9 (where Maio is called 'Madius Apulus'). Richard of San Germano, ed. Garufi, pp. 162, 164. Letters of Gregory IX, iii, 46; ed. Auvray, I, col. 204. Romanos, *op. cit.*, p. 131. F. Dölger, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des Oströmischen Reiches*, 3, no. 1721.

¹¹ Akropolites 41, 44. Ernoul 394-5. Dandolo 344-6. Liber Plegiorum, ed. Predelli, Appendix, pp. 184-5. Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, II, 265-6. Zlatarski, *Istorija*, pp. 333-4. Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 169-71. Asen's triumphal inscription of 1230 shows that he already considered himself to be suzerain of Constantinople. See Jireček, *Bulgaren*, p. 252, and see below, p. 113. Narjot of Toucy had originally accompanied Peter of Courtenay, and in 1219 had succeeded Conon of Béthune as baillie of the Empire.

¹² Ernoul 466-8. Philip Mouskes 27078-28014. Richard of San Germano 174-5. Akropolites (41) mentions the Italians in Theodore's army. Hopf, *Geschichte Griechenlands*, p. 257, writes of a German contingent. See Muralt, *Essai de Chronographie byzantine*, I, p. 342.

¹³ Akropolites 41-2. Gregoras, I, 28. Richard of San Germano 166. Klokotnitsa is now the village of Semidje, on the right bank of the Maritza (Hebros) between Philippopolis and Adrianople.

¹⁴ Akropolites 42. Gregoras, I, 28. Pachymeres, I, 82. Ephraim 7701-2. Alberic of Trois Fontaines (M.G.H. XXIII), 927. Richard of San Germano (*loc. cit.*) says that Theodore was blinded immediately after capture.

¹⁵ Akropolites 43. Ephraim 8085-93.

CHAPTER 6

MANUEL ANGELOS DESPOT AND EMPEROR OF THESSALONIKE

1230-37

WHILE Theodore remained victorious the common ambition of the recovery of Constantinople bound his Kingdom together. But once his army suffered a serious defeat it disintegrated and collapsed without resistance. The weaknesses of his administration were clearly shown when the Bulgarians carried all before them through his territory. Only a few months after the battle of Klokotnitsa John Asen could record the extent of his conquests with justifiable pride in the Cathedral of the Forty Martyrs which he built at Tirnovo:

'I, John Asen, in Christ God true Tsar and Autokrat of the Bulgars . . . in the twelfth year of my reign . . . defeated the Greeks and captured the Greek Tsar Thodor Komnin together with all his nobles; and I occupied all the land from Odrin (Adrianople) to Drač (Durazzo), Greek, Serbian, and Albanian alike. To the Franks only the city of Tsargrad (Constantinople) remains, but even they have become subject to my Majesty, for they have no King but me, and owe their survival to me alone.'¹

The great dream of a Bulgarian-Byzantine Empire seemed nearer than ever to fulfilment; and the boastful promises that John of Brienne had made, 'to recapture for the Latin Empire all the territory held by Theodore as far as Didymoteichos and Adrianople', were doomed even before he took up his duties as regent. Alexios Slav, the former Despot of Melnik, disappeared into obscurity at the Bulgarian capital; and Asen's western boundaries were secured by an alliance with the brother of the Serbian King, Vladislav, who had married one of his daughters.²

On the marriage of another of Asen's daughters depended the continued existence of the Kingdom of Thessalonike. Manuel, Theodore's brother, had contrived to escape capture at Klokot-

nitsa, and retired to Thessalonike, where, despite the fact that he had taken up arms against his father-in-law and thereby made his brother's perjury doubly serious, Asen allowed him to assert at least a measure of independent authority. The ghost of Theodore's Kingdom was resuscitated on the security of his marriage to Maria Beloslava. Manuel's part in the history of the Despotate before 1230 is obscure. During his brother's early campaigns in the north he seems to have been entrusted with a command in Thessaly; and the title of Despot had already been conferred on him by Theodore. This title he continued to use; but once established in Thessalonike he regarded himself as successor to the crown, and flattered his self-esteem with all the ceremony of the Byzantine court, signing his decrees in the red ink of an Emperor, a piece of vanity that won him the derision of an ambassador from Nicaea, who remarked that the title of 'King and Lord' (*σὲ τὸν βασιλέα καὶ δεσπότην*) was generally accorded to Christ alone. His dominions extended over Thessaly and Epiros. Durazzo and Albania acknowledged Bulgarian rule, but Corfu remained loyal to the Greeks. In Aitolia and Akarnania Manuel's brother Constantine still ruled as Despot; and his nephew Michael II, the rightful heir to the Despotate, was soon to return to Arta to man the defences of Epiros against Bulgarian imperialism.³

It is difficult to determine the extent to which Manuel's status in Thessalonike and his policy towards his neighbours were dependent upon the good will and influence of John Asen. Akropolites says that Asen strictly respected Manuel's rights because of their relationship by marriage; and Manuel seems to have been allowed to appoint governors and officials of his own choice for the administration of his Kingdom. The names of two of the governors of Thessalonike, George Apokaukos and Alexios Peganites, are known; and George Choniates, a nephew of Michael Akominatos, held a command in Thessaly as Protobestiarites of Manuel.⁴ In ecclesiastical affairs, however, John Asen took steps to thwart the ambitions of Theodore's bishops by making the Metropolis of Thessalonike a suffragan bishopric of Tirnovo, and installing there a prelate of his own nomination. The vacillations of Manuel's diplomacy strongly suggest that he found it hard to shake off the burden of indebtedness to his powerful father-in-law; and his attempts to strike an independent line with the

great powers of the west came to an abrupt end with the change of Bulgarian policy.⁵

The loyalty of the Greeks was behind him, however, and what he had he intended to hold. One of his first acts was to renew the concessions that his brother Michael had granted to the citizens of Corfu, and to secure his hereditary rights over the island by making it over to his twin sister Anna Komene, the wife of Maio Orsini of Cephalonia. Corfu was the furthest and most vulnerable outpost of his dominions, and Manuel gave orders that its citadel should be strengthened and its army prepared for any emergency. It was unlikely that John Asen would attempt its conquest, but it was an easy prey to the designs of Frederick II. Frederick had recently made his peace with Pope Gregory IX by the treaty of San Germano. The defeat of Theodore by John Asen must have reminded him of the fact that he had himself a title to the Kingdom of Thessalonike. The islands of Cephalonia and Ithaka were already his vassals, and the temptation to annex Corfu was common to all the rulers of Sicily. Theodore had only with difficulty held at bay 'the ravening beasts from Sicily' who had tried to stake their claims in Epiros in earlier years; and Manuel might well fear for the safety of Corfu and the adjacent mainland. It was therefore imperative for him to keep up Theodore's friendship with Frederick. But at the same time he could strengthen his position with regard to Bulgaria and safeguard his interests against the Latin Empire by securing the support of Rome. It was with these objects in view that Manuel commissioned George Bardanes, the Metropolitan of Corfu, to go to Italy as his ambassador to negotiate with the Emperor Frederick II and with the Pope, Gregory IX. He would ask for an alliance with the Emperor and promise spiritual obedience to the Pope.⁶

Bardanes sailed from Corfu in the autumn of 1231. His ship was blown off its course for Brindisi, and he landed instead at Otranto on 15 October. His mission seemed doomed to failure from the outset. Scarcely had he set foot on Italian soil when he was taken seriously ill. He was unable to continue his journey; but from his sick bed he wrote to Frederick II to explain the purpose of his visit, a letter couched in the most flattering terms, excusing the humble Bishop of Corfu for daring to approach the mighty monarch even in writing. If the severity of the winter

and the state of his health should prevent him from completing his mission within the year he hoped to be able to pay his respects to the Emperor in the early spring of 1232. He intended also, if his strength allowed, to travel on to Rome.⁷

For about a month he enjoyed the care and hospitality of the Greek monks at the Orthodox Monastery of Casole, not far from Otranto. Nektarios the Abbot was an old friend whose acquaintance he had first made at Constantinople during the ecclesiastical negotiations of 1214, at which Bardanes had taken part as representative of Michael Akominatos and Nektarios as interpreter for the Papal legate Pelagius. In his correspondence Bardanes speaks of their friendship as his greatest spiritual comfort since the death of the Metropolitan of Athens; and when Nektarios himself died not long afterwards Bardanes wrote a personal letter to Nicholas, the Governor of Otranto, expressing his grief at the loss of so valued a friend. It was during this period of enforced idleness at Casole that Bardanes made the acquaintance of some Franciscans and held a number of discussions with them on the various dogmatic and liturgical differences between the Eastern and the Western Churches. But his illness grew worse, and on 17 November he had to be moved into Otranto, where he was lodged in the house of John Grassos, the imperial notary, whose servants looked after him and finally nursed him back to health.⁸

In the meantime, however, Manuel, concerned at this unexpected delay in his negotiations, took upon himself to write to Pope Gregory IX, formally offering to place the Kingdom of Thessalonike under Papal protection. The Pope replied in April 1232, praising Manuel for his spiritual devotion and return to the Church, promising him every assistance and security, and assuring him that John of Brienne and the Latin Patriarch of Constantinople would be notified and instructed in their duties towards him. Some pointed remarks about Theodore's dealings with the Papacy were introduced into the letter to serve as a warning.⁹

The Pope's letter had barely been drafted, however, when Manuel decided to change his plans and enter into ecclesiastical and diplomatic relations with Nicaea instead of Rome. Bardanes was recalled from Italy before he had had time to achieve anything, and wrote to his host at Otranto lamenting the expense wasted on a futile expedition, and deplored the fact that his

hopes of seeing the Emperor and of visiting Rome had been dashed by Manuel's countermand.¹⁰

Manuel's abrupt change of policy might be explained simply as the indecision of a feeble ruler. But it was also a tactful move to bring himself into line with the policy of his Bulgarian protector. In respect of the Pope and the Patriarch the issue involved might seem to be only one of ecclesiastical allegiances; but Manuel's sudden desire to reunite his Church with the Patriarchate of Nicaea was inspired by purely political motives. The influence of the clergy on the affairs of the Despotate and the Kingdom of Thessalonike had been radically altered by the events of 1230. John Apokaukos had almost certainly resigned after Theodore's defeat. The ambitions of Demetrios Chomatenos had suffered a severe setback through the conquests of John Asen and the renewed authority of the Archbishop of Tirnovo; and Bardanes, who had clearly overcome his aversion to negotiations with the Church of Rome, was also submissive to the commands of his ruler.¹¹ Had circumstances been otherwise, the patriotic clergy of Epiros would have done all in their power to prevent dealings either with Rome or with Nicaea. But the very existence of the Kingdom of Thessalonike after 1230 depended on its diplomatic relations with the other great powers, particularly Bulgaria.

It is therefore not without significance that John Asen should have chosen the same moment to quarrel with the Pope, and to air his grievance against the Latin Empire by severing the bond of spiritual allegiance which had bound the Bulgarian Church to Rome for some twenty-eight years. Basil, the Archbishop of Tirnovo, who had been granted Patriarchal status by Innocent III, retired to Mount Athos, and shortly afterwards resigned. Such was the situation when the Patriarchal legate, Christopher, arrived in Greece from Nicaea in 1232. Christopher, who deemed himself Exarch not only of Greece but 'of all the west', wrote to John Asen on the subject of appointing a successor to the See of Tirnovo, urging that the proposed candidate should either be sent to Nicaea for confirmation, or else elected independently with the advice and ratification of the Exarch in his vice-Patriarchal capacity.¹² The tone of this letter suggests that Asen had every intention of settling the matter without reference to Nicaea; and such in fact seems to have been the case. The

ex-Bishop of Philippopolis, Gregory, was elevated to the Metropolitan throne of Tirnovo, and paid only a nominal allegiance to the Patriarch of Nicaea. At the same time Thessalonike was reduced to a suffragan bishopric of the Bulgarian Church. Joseph, hitherto Metropolitan of Thessalonike, was removed, and one Michael Pratanos was installed in his place on the orders of John Asen; and to minimize its influence still further, the Church of Thessalonike was deprived of its authority over the bishopric of Ierissos, on the boundary of Mount Athos.¹³

~~The Church if not the State of Thessalonike was manifestly under Bulgarian supervision; and when John Asen saw fit to terminate his dealings with Rome it would have been imprudent for Manuel not to follow suit.~~ The only alternative to accepting Bulgarian domination was to submit once again to the jurisdiction of Nicaea, even though it meant compromising the ecclesiastical independence which had been so hardly won for the western Greek Church by Theodore and Chomatenos. Accordingly Manuel opened negotiations with a letter to the Patriarch Germanos early in 1232, a document which from its literary graces would seem to have been drawn up by the ever-useful Bardanes. Patriarch and Emperor alike were called upon to help in 'removing the disgrace of the schism which divided Greeks from Greeks'. Germanos was asked to extend the light of his authority to the Church in Greece, and to impress upon John Vatatzes the political advantages to be gained from forgetting the recent dissensions. Manuel was loth to make unnecessary concessions, however; and to try the temper of the Patriarch he advanced the old pretext for the independent appointment of clergy in Greece, namely that it was impossible for bishops-elect to make the journey to Nicaea for confirmation. As an example he cited the hazards encountered by Choniates, the new Metropolitan of Naupaktos, on his voyage from Nicaea. Finally he begged the Patriarch to recognize the anomalies of the times, and to show his care for his western flock either by instructing his synod to give official recognition to the clergy that the western synod ordained, or by permitting some legate from Nicaea to run the risks of the voyage to Greece to act as his plenipotentiary.¹⁴

The Patriarch's answer to this last feeble attempt at a compromise on the part of the western Greeks was both forthright

and sarcastic. In Manuel and Bardanes he had no such formidable adversaries as those with whom his predecessors had so ineffectually contended; and by adopting a firm line at the first sign of weakening he showed the soundness of his own judgement as well as the weakmindedness of Manuel. The Kingdom of Nicaea, he retorted, acting only in accordance with the ancient traditions and canons of the Church and of the Empire, had done all in its power to draw the Epirote Church towards it. The hazards of the sea and the difficulties of communication were neither relevant nor yet a real impediment. They served merely as a pretext for prolonging the schism. 'The man who wishes to deny his friends casts around for excuses'. When had there not been pirates and perils on the sea? Did not the same perils exist for both parties? Or was it to be supposed that the eastern Greeks were naturally terrifying to the pirates? The experiences of the new Metropolitan of Naupaktos were nothing strange to the clergy of that district, whose safety was constantly threatened by piratical raids. The conclusion of his letter is full of sarcastic references to Manuel's 'Kingdom' and mimicks the flowery phrases of Bardanes:

'In response to your prayers, and in default of a personal visit to your Kingdom to hear your mellifluous voice, I have elected to send to you as Patriarchal legate and plenipotentiary the Bishop of Ankyra. . . . For indeed we are wont to take exception to promises hastily given and tardily fulfilled; and the blame for our differences falls not on me. If accusation is to be made I must leave the naming of the guilty party to your Majesty's discernment'.¹⁵

Christopher, Bishop of Ankyra in the province of Galatia, was accordingly invested at a synod held at Nicaea on 6 March 1232 with the credentials of Patriarchal legate and 'Exarch of the western Church', and shortly afterwards arrived at Manuel's court. His reception was very different from that given to the Bishop of Amastris, whom Germanos had sent as his legate nine years before. A synod was convened of almost all the western Greek hierarchy, at which a letter from the Patriarch was read out; and Bardanes, adopting a tone noticeably changed from that in which he had formerly addressed Germanos, replied on

behalf of his colleagues revoking all claims to ecclesiastical independence:

'We who do not blush to be called the sheep of your flock, summoned at the behest of our lord Manuel Doukas, (*'qui pietatem armis ornavit et arma pietate illustravit'*), willingly assembled and joyfully heard the Patriarchal message. . . . Wherefore we all acknowledge your superiority, and repent of our past sins, and affirm that we are of one body'.¹⁶

At the end of this letter, which even in Latin translation has preserved something of Bardanes' style, there is a faint suggestion that the western hierarchy were still only prepared to admit their 'spiritual' unity with Nicaea. But the letter that Manuel sent to Germanos at about the same time made it clear that there were now to be no saving clauses in the submission of his Church to the Nicene Patriarchate. The Patriarch, he said, had outdone his predecessors by 'conquering' the western Greeks and restoring them to his blessed authority. The time was ripe for him to visit Greece in person. The door had been opened and the roads were ready for his coming. Meanwhile, the Bishop of Ankyra, sent to shed the light of the Patriarch on those who had been so long deprived of it, was welcomed as his representative. The barrier between the eastern and the western Churches had been torn down and a unity restored which would bring not only spiritual security but also worldly prosperity. 'We shall milk the milk of those that sucked us dry and devour the wealth of our erstwhile oppressors. The mountains of our desert land will fatten, our threshing floors be filled, our wine vats overflow, and our mouths be full of praises of our Lord'.¹⁷

Thus the schism in the Orthodox Church, which had lasted for nearly eight years, came to an end, healed not so much by the efforts of the Patriarch as by the political circumstances arising out of the disappearance of Theodore and the silence of Chomatenos. How long the Exarch continued to supervise the affairs of the western Greek Church is not known, but his expenses and privileges were reviewed and confirmed at least once; and it is clear that Germanos, for all the professed penitence of the Epirote clergy as a whole, was not prepared too readily to forgive

and forget the sins committed against his authority by Chomatenos, Apokaukos, and Bardanes, particularly in the matter of the coronation of Theodore. Bardanes, the last active member of this trio, made his good will towards the Exarch plain in a letter that he wrote from his sick bed in Corfu. Although his ill-health and the difficulties of travel had made it impossible for him to come to Arta, Bardanes claimed to be wholeheartedly in sympathy with the efforts being made to regulate the affairs of the Epirote Church, and hoped that the Exarch might yet find time to visit 'the lowliest and most remote of all the bishoprics'. John Apokaukos, on the other hand, on whom the Patriarch rightly or wrongly laid much of the blame for the 'revolt' of the western Church against Nicaea, could neither extend nor expect sympathy. He had retreated into the obscurity of a small monastery near Kozyle, to end his days as a beggar and not as a bishop. He considered himself to be a marked man 'patiently awaiting the censure of the Patriarch's legate', and he wrote a pitiful letter to his friend the Bishop of Ioannina beseeching him to act as an intermediary and to try to bring about a peaceful reconciliation.¹⁸

Only Demetrios Chomatenos was defiant to the end. Theodore's defeat and the rapid recovery of Bulgaria under John Asen had shorn the Archbishopric of Ochrida of most of its glory; and Chomatenos seems to have withdrawn from politics to nurse his injured pride. In 1231 he wrote to Manuel pleading illness as his excuse for not visiting the court of Thessalonike to pay his respects. But the arrival of the Exarch Christopher in the following year inspired him to make a last defence of the ecclesiastical independence of Theodore's Kingdom; and he composed an exhaustive 'sermo apologeticus' on the subject of the appointment of a Bishop to Servia ten years before, which was a justification in detail of the general hypothesis that the Kingdom of Thessalonike was autonomous in matters of Church and State. He ended with the sarcastic lament that the glories of Byzantium and all the royal pomp and ecclesiastical dignity should have shrunk into the little measure of the province of Bithynia, its life, like that of the Kingdom in Greece, dictated and circumscribed by the flux of fortune. It was a spirited but ineffectual protest. The disappointment of Theodore's defeat, aggravated by ill-health and disillusionment, soon afterwards hastened the death of the

most ambitious and the most learned of the prelates of the Despotate.¹⁹

Further evidence of the re-establishment of the Patriarch's authority in Greece appears from an edict issued by Germanos ordering an enquiry into the status of the 'royal' or imperial monasteries in Manuel's territory, which were outside the jurisdiction of local bishops and enjoyed special Patriarchal protection. In the circumstances following the Latin conquest several of the monasteries in Epiros had been deprived of the imperial patronage or protection that had been bestowed on them before 1204; and with the growth of the Despotate as an independent state the monks had not been encouraged to seek any definition of their status from the Patriarch at Nicaea. Some monasteries had taken to claiming the 'imperial' title without having any right to do so; others were granted as benefices to the new aristocracy of the Despotate and Kingdom of Thessalonike, and assumed the privileged status which only the Patriarch could legally grant. The new relationship between Thessalonike and Nicaea made it at last possible for the Patriarch to exercise his rights over the monasteries in Greece. One of the duties of the Exarch Christopher was to conduct an investigation into the facts of each individual case in which special privileges were claimed. The western Greek hierarchy were ordered to meet together at Arta to examine the title-deeds of every monastery, and by reference to their status before 1204, to determine which were entitled to claim imperial or Patriarchal protection or jurisdiction, and which were responsible only to their local bishop.²⁰

The renunciation of the ecclesiastical independence of the western Greeks, which had been so much a part of Theodore's more worldly ambitions, amounted to an open acknowledgement of the fact that the ruler of Nicaea was the one Byzantine Emperor. The Kingdom of Thessalonike had been robbed of its greatness and reduced to a subordinate position by the two predominant powers, Bulgaria and Nicaea; and Manuel found himself obliged to direct his policy according to their wishes.

He was still bold enough, however, to befriend the exiled ruler of a Kingdom that was even more at the mercy of foreign intrigue than his own. Radoslav of Serbia, who had succeeded his father Stephen Nemanja some years before, had co-operated closely

with the Kingdom of Thessalonike in all matters, influenced to a great extent by his wife Anna, who was the daughter of Theodore. Manuel, who had formerly been married to Radoslav's aunt, hoped to preserve the friendship of the Serbians, and determined to support Radoslav even after John Asen had openly opposed him. After 1230 Asen had styled himself suzerain of Serbia, and encouraged a conspiracy against Radoslav which was organized by his brother Vladislav, who had married one of the many daughters of the Bulgarian King. Radoslav was dethroned and exiled in 1233, and early in the following year fled with Anna to Ragusa, where he was given shelter and hospitality. From there he sailed to Durazzo, then apparently in Manuel's territory, where he had the misfortune to fall in with 'a great Frank', who removed the unhappy Anna from him at the point of a sword. Bereft alike of a crown and queen Radoslav ended his life in a monastery in Serbia; while Anna later sought refuge in a convent in Epiros. The citizens of Ragusa, however, had their reward, and Manuel showed his gratitude for their kindness to his niece and her husband 'King Stephen Doukas' by granting their merchants full protection and complete freedom from taxation throughout his dominions.²¹

Meanwhile a further blow had been struck at the already circumscribed authority of the Kingdom of Thessalonike. Bulgaria and Nicaea formally entered into alliance; and on the basis of a marriage contract between Asen's daughter Helen, who had been rejected as a wife for Baldwin II, and Theodore Laskaris, the son of John Vatatzes, a treaty was signed. The wedding took place at Lampsakos early in 1235, and the Patriarch Germanos who performed the ceremony was assisted by the Archbishop of Tirnovo.

As a result of this concourse of the leading personalities of Church and State a number of old scores was settled. The monks of Athos seized the opportunity to air their grievances against Bulgaria and to renounce the authority over them not only of the Bishop of Ierissos, whom the Bulgarian Primate had raised from the status of a suffragan, but also of the Metropolitan of Thessalonike, Michael Pratanos, and of the 'Patriarch' of Tirnovo himself. A synod was convened at Gallipoli where their case was heard by Germanos in the presence of John Asen and

John Vatatzes. The issue was a delicate one, and the Nicene Patriarch could not press his claims to authority over Thessalonike and Athos alike without giving offence to Bulgaria. Finally a compromise was reached. Vatatzes, doubtless against the wishes of Germanos, gave official recognition to the independence and Patriarchal status of the Archbishop of Tirnovo while Asen on his part declared the ordination of Michael Pratanos as Bishop of Thessalonike to be invalid, and consented to the appointment of one Manuel Disypatos. The monks of Athos could only be pacified by the acknowledgment of their complete independence. Thus the Church of Bulgaria became once again autocephalous, this time under the patronage of Nicaea; while the unfortunate Pratanos was sent into exile, and the Metropolis of Thessalonike became directly answerable to the Nicene Patriarch.²²

The powerful coalition of Bulgaria and Nicaea was no doubt intended to include Manuel as a subordinate party. But the negotiations with regard to the Church of Thessalonike had once again been conducted quite without reference to his authority; nor does it appear that he was so much as invited to join the military operations on which the new allies now embarked. Vatatzes and Asen made two combined assaults on Constantinople, the first in 1235, which was beaten off by John of Brienne, and the second in the winter of 1236, when the city was saved by the intervention of Geoffrey II of Villehardouin, who had hurried to its defence from the Morea with a hundred and twenty ships. The hereditary antagonism between Bulgarians and Greeks showed itself again, however, when John of Brienne died in 1237. Asen severed relations with Vatatzes, and sent ambassadors to Nicaea to retrieve his daughter Helen by force. The Pope seized this opportunity to enlist Bulgarian aid for the defence of the Latin Empire and regardless of his excommunication of John Asen in the previous year, sent the Bishop of Perugia to Tirnovo to arrange a Latin-Bulgarian alliance. But this was short-lived. Asen deserted the Franks during a combined siege of the town of Tzurulon in the same year. The vengeance of God for his treachery to Nicaea visited him in a series of family misfortunes, and he was chastened into renewing his treaty with Vatatzes.²³

Throughout all these activities on the part of Bulgaria, Nicaea,

and the Latin Empire Manuel maintained a cautious neutrality. He was incapable of profiting from their disputes and was apparently never asked to help them achieve their object. In 1236 he saw fit to add to the number of his suzerains the successful Prince of Achaia, Geoffrey II of Villehardouin. Perhaps he was impressed by the appearance of the powerful fleet that Geoffrey brought to the defence of Constantinople in that year, and chose to pay his respects to him, 'secretly going over to him and becoming his man', for fear that it might be turned on Thessalonike. At all events there was nothing to be lost by keeping on good terms with both parties in the struggle, and less fear of his being dislodged from his own precarious position by pursuing a policy of appeasement to all his neighbours. His Kingdom was thus tolerated and permitted to carry on its detached existence alike by Bulgaria and by Nicaea.²⁴

¹ Zlatarski, *Istorija*, Appendix 5, pp. 587-96. Jireček, *Bulgaren*, pp. 251-2. Vasiliev, *History*, p. 525. In the same year Asen granted concessions to the merchants of Ragusa throughout all his territory, including 'Skoplje, Prilep, Devol, and Thessalonike' (Thalloczy, Jireček, and Sufflay, *Acta et Diplomata Albanie*, I, pp. 50-1).

² Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, II, pp. 267-8. Jireček, *Bulgaren*, p. 251. That Slav ended his days at Asen's court appears from the inscription on a gold ring found at Tirnovo: *SLAV STOLNIK CAREV* (Seneschal of the Tsar). See Ivanov, *Anneaux anciens bulgares et byzantins*, *Bulletin de la Société archéologique bulgare*, II (1911), fasc. 1, p. 6, and Pl. I, fig. 4.

³ Akropolites 43-4. Ephraim 8107-22. The earliest reference to Manuel as Despot is in Theodore's decree of November 1219 concerning the diocese of Domoko, published by P. Kerameus, *Analecta*, vol. IV, no. 37, p. 118 (his dating to 1234 cannot be accepted, since Theodore was then in captivity). Manuel is also mentioned as having been in Berroia *κατὰ πρόταξιν* of Theodore (Chomatenos 525).

⁴ Akropolites 44. For George Apokaukos and Alexios Pagonites, see below, p. 197, and Chomatenos 451. For George Choniates, see Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Τεοσαρακονταετηρίς Κόντον*, pp. 379-82.

⁵ The elucidation of Manuel's foreign policy up to 1232 depends on a number of letters written by George, a Bishop of Corfu, originally put by Baronius (*Annales Ecclesiastici*) between the years 1176 and 1188. The arguments for ascribing these to George Bardanes and Manuel Angelos were first set forth by V. G. Vasilievsky in *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction*, vol. 238 (1885), pp. 224-33, and later by E. Kurtz in *B.Z.*, XV (1906), pp. 603-13. See Vasiliev, *History*, p. 561 and references. Further evidence appears from a MS. concerning the history of the Monastery of Casole, where the Abbot Nectarius, with whom the Bishop George (Bardanes) corresponded, is dated 1220-35. C. Diehl, *Le Monastère de S. Nicolas di Casole près d'Otrante d'après un manuscrit inédit*, *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire*, publié par l'Ecole française de Rome, vol. VI (Rome 1886).

⁶ Letters of Bardanes to Frederick II and Manuel, ed. E. Kurtz, *B.Z.*, XV (1906),

nos. 1, 2, 3, pp. 603-4. For Frederick's designs on Corfu, see S. Borsari, Federico II e l'Oriente bizantino, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 63 (1951), p. 281. Bardanes refers to the breach of commercial relations with Venice, but hopes for an early settlement. For Manuel's renewal of the Corfiotes' privileges, see N. Barone, *Notizie storiche di Re Carlo III di Durazzo*, p. 61; Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

⁷ Bardanes, *ed.* Kurtz, *loc. cit.*, no. 4, p. 604.

⁸ Bardanes, *ed.* Kurtz, *loc. cit.*, nos. 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, pp. 604-6. Bardanes has left his own account of his discussion on the subject of Purgatory with a Franciscan called Bartholomew. He also corresponded with some monks from Neretum (Nardo) on the Gulf of Taranto. See Mustoxidi, *op. cit.*, pp. 423-7, and Appendix, pp. XLIX-L. S. Borsari, *op. cit.*, p. 282. P. M. Roncaglia, Il primo incontro dei Francescani con i Greci: Fra Bartolomeo, O.F.M., e Georgios Bardanes a Casole (Otranto), 15 Ottobre-17 Novembre 1231, *Atti VIII Congresso Int. di Studi bizantini*, I (1953), pp. 448-52.

⁹ Letters of Gregory IX, *ed.* Auvray, no. 484, p. 493.

¹⁰ Bardanes, *ed.* Kurtz, *loc. cit.*, no. 6, p. 605.

¹¹ Meliarakes (p. 291) supposes that Chomatenos died about 1230. But he is known to have been alive in 1234-35. See below, note 19.

¹² E. Kurtz, Christophorus von Ankyra als Exarch der Patriarchen Germanos, *B.Z.*, XVI (1907), no. 7, pp. 141-2 (see also pp. 129-31).

¹³ P. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athos-Klöster*, Leipzig 1894, pp. 187-9, no. viii (see also pp. 49-53). A résumé is given by L. Petit, Les Évêques de Thessalonique, *Echos d'Orient*, V (October 1901), pp. 31-2. Joseph, who does not figure in Petit's list of bishops, is described as ἑνοφήπος in 1235 (see a report of a law-suit in Chomatenos 447, where the Bishop of Ierissos, Neophytos, is also named).

¹⁴ Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi*, III, p. 59.

¹⁵ Miklosich and Müller, III, p. 62.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65. The letters of Manuel, Bardanes, and Germanos relating to the visit of the Patriarchal legate have been collected and published by V. G. Vasilievsky in *Journal of the Ministry of Public Instruction*, March and April 1885, pp. 35-6 and 234-8, and again by E. Kurtz in *B.Z.*, XVI (1907), pp. 120-42. Kurtz included also this letter (no. 2, pp. 134-6) from Bardanes to Germanos, from the misplaced correspondence of George of Corfu originally published by Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, under the year 1180.

¹⁷ Letter no. 1 in Kurtz, *B.Z.*, XVI, p. 131. The context as well as the wording of this letter make it clear that the series follows on from the three letters published by Miklosich and Müller. The beginning of Manuel's reply (*καλῶς ἡττᾶσθαι, πακαπορόν*) takes up the *ἱππόμετα* at the beginning of the Patriarch's letter.

¹⁸ Letters nos. 3, 5, 6 in Kurtz, *B.Z.*, XVI, pp. 136-7, 139-40.

¹⁹ Chomatenos, *ed.* Pitra, no. 117, cols. 501-4 (to Manuel). For the date, see no. 38, cols. 165-72; no. 88, cols. 335-8 (see Apokaukos, *ed.* P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskoum*, no. 3, p. 237); no. 150, cols. 548-88. This letter was first connected with the Exarch's visit by Drinov, *op. cit.*, V.V., II (1895), p. 14. The latest date that can be assigned to Chomatenos is 1234-35 (no. 106, cols. 447-62).

²⁰ Letter no. 4 in Kurtz, *B.Z.*, XVI, pp. 137-9. See V. Laurent, Charisticariat et Commende à Byzance, *Revue des Etudes byzantines*, XII (1954), pp. 108-13. For the special duties of Exarchs with regard to monasteries, see L. Bréhier, *Les Institutions de l'Empire byzantin*, pp. 534, 552. See below, p. 132.

²¹ Jireček, *Serben*, I, pp. 304-5. Miklosich and Müller, III, pp. 66-7. Thalloczy, Jireček, and Sufflay, *Acta et Diplomata Albaniæ*, I, p. 50. M. Markovic, Byzantine Sources in the Archives of Dubrovnik, *Sbornik Radova (XXI)*, *Vizantoloski Institut*, I (Belgrade 1952), no. 1, pp. 211-19. See also P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (1953), pp. 409-10 and references.

²² Akropolites 48-51. Gregoras, I, 29-30. Ephraim 8179-86. Jireček, *Bulgaren*, p. 258. Müller, *Byzantinische Analiken*, *Sitzungsberichte der K. Akademie in Wien*, phil.-hist. Class., IX (1853), p. 393. Meyer, *Die Haupturkunden für die Geschichte der Athos-Klöster*, no. viii, pp. 187-9. Le Quien, *Oriens Christianus*, II, cols. 50-1. The authenticity of the documents relating to Mount Athos has been seriously questioned (see F. Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 1747, p. 14). The elevation of Tirnovo to a Patriarchate

was, at least later, acknowledged to be a political compromise (see document in Miklosich and Müller, I, p. 346).

²³ Akropolites 52-7. Gregoras, I, 29. Philip Mouskes 29050-121 and 29238-52. Alberic of Trois Fontaines 938-9. Jireček, *Bulgaren*, pp. 259-60. Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, p. 180.

²⁴ Alberic of Trois Fontaines 938. Hopf, Romanos, and others maintain that Manuel became the vassal of Villehardouin in 1230. But Alberic, the only source, says 1236. Manuel's brother-in-law, Count Maio of Cephalonia, followed his example at the same time (Alberic, *loc. cit.*, *Libro de los Fechos*, 240).

CHAPTER 7

MICHAEL II ANGELOS
THE END OF THE KINGDOM OF THESSALONIKE

1230-43

WHILE Manuel contrived to maintain his hold on Thessalonike, the Despotate was revived in Epiros under the leadership of another member of the family, and for a time northern Greece was divided between the separate governments of a Despot in Arta and an Emperor in Thessalonike. Michael II Angelos, the son of the founder of the Despotate and nephew of Manuel and Theodore, had returned to claim his heritage and to set himself up as ruler of the territory which his father had originally preserved from conquest by the Crusaders.

The only sources for the early life of Michael II are the pious but confused hagiography of his wife, St. Theodora of Arta, composed in the seventeenth century by the monk Job, and the colourful but equally confused Chronicle of Galaxidi, written in 1703. Both documents are based on conflicting and often inaccurate traditions, and their principal value lies in the fact that they present two of the main actors in the history of the Despotate as distinct personalities, rather than as pawns in the history of the Kingdom of Nicaea. When all the circumstances of the Despotate have been forgotten in Epiros, the memory of Michael and Theodora lives on, perpetuated by the churches with which Michael and his family adorned the town of Arta, and consecrated in the feast day of his saintly wife which is celebrated every 11 March.¹

According to Job, Michael escaped with his mother to the Morea when the assassination of his father resulted in Theodore's seizure of power in 1215. Michael was then still a child, and Theodore seems to have conspired to deprive him of his patrimony. After Theodore's defeat and capture in Bulgaria he returned 'now in the prime of youth' apparently at the invitation of his uncle Manuel, and took over command of the territory in Epiros that had formerly belonged to his father. Constantine

128

Angelos, who had been undisputed master of Akarnania and Aitolia for some fifteen years, retired either voluntarily or under orders to Manuel's court; and Michael no doubt received a warm welcome from those who remembered his father's rule and had little to expect in the way of protection or leadership from Thessalonike.²

It was perhaps after paying his respects at the court of Thessalonike that Michael visited the town of Servia in northern Thessaly. Here it was that he met the beautiful Theodora, daughter of the late Sebastokrator John Petraliphas, who had once been governor of Macedonia and Thessaly. Her brothers had been acting as her guardians since the death of their father, and she was living in Servia perhaps under the care of her aunt Maria Petraliphas, the wife of Theodore. Her beauty and her virtue were renowned, and Michael was completely captivated by her charms. He approached her brothers to ask them to allow her to become his wife. They consented, and the young couple were married. From Servia they set out 'in brilliant style' for Epiros; and it was at Arta, his, father's capital, that Michael established himself as Despot.³

In the early part of his career Michael devoted himself to the welfare and protection of his subjects, while the virtuous Theodora, though raised to so lofty a social position, continued to conduct herself in humility and without ceremony, neither giving way to pride, nor yet, for all her youth, submitting to the temptations of luxury. 'Rather did she incline the more to an attachment to God, to the cultivation of virtue, and to the life of temperance, embracing lowliness of heart, restraining her passions, second to none in the exercise of love, meekness, compassion, and pity, and in every way serving God with her whole heart'.

But the calm and happiness of their married life was soon interrupted, for Michael became ensnared by the wiles of an aristocratic courtesan of Arta, unhappily called Gangrene. Job gives a graphic account of the melancholy events which tried to the extreme the patience and the love of Michael's wife. The Devil, he writes, quickly grew jealous of the contentment of the newly-married couple, and being unable to corrupt the saintliness or bend the adamantine spirit of Theodora, turned on Michael and implanted in him the lust of adultery. The lady Gangrene, herself the handmaid of the Devil, used her satanic powers to

bewitch Michael, and sowed in his heart an implacable hatred for his wife. Theodora, ever long-suffering and patient, showed no resentment, but calmly awaited the divine intervention for which she prayed in her nightly vigils; and Michael, ever more wildly reckless, succumbed to his base passion and separated himself from his lawful wife. He thrust her from him, and drove her into exile. It was decreed that his court and subjects should cease to remember Theodora, that her name should nowhere be mentioned, and that all should revere in her stead the fair and noble Gangrene.

None dared to raise a voice in protest; and Theodora alone and unprotected knew not where to turn for refuge. Within but a few months the first fruit of her marriage was destined to be born. But Michael's heart was turned to steel. She was banished from the comforts of her home, and through five long years endured all the miseries of poverty, hunger, and disprized love. Exiled and unknown she roamed the countryside 'with only the pretty birds for company', but never once did there pass from her lips a single impiety or complaint against her husband. She prayed not for deliverance but for strength to endure and grace to forgive, and submitted her hopes in constant prayer to the hands of God.

Meanwhile she brought her child into the world, and it was with the son and future successor of the husband who had spurned her lying in her arms that her wanderings led her one day to the village of Prenista on the slopes of Mount Tzoumerka. A priest from the village came upon her gathering roots in a field nearby, and seeing her pitiful condition begged her to confide in him. Theodora, with tears and under oath of secrecy, told him who she was; whereupon the priest straightway conveyed her and her son to his own house, and concealed her there with all care and attention for the remainder of her exile.⁴

After five years Michael began to weary of his immoral life. His soul was troubled, and he had dreams that the vengeance of God would smite him if he did not repent. His court and his subjects were no longer silent in their disapproval of his conduct. They took matters into their own hands. One day when Michael was absent from his palace certain nobles of the court broke in upon the adulteress Gangrene, and fell to reviling her as a seducer

and a witch. Michael returned to find that she had made full confession of her wickedness and of the powers of sorcery that she had used to corrupt him. The revelation restored him to his senses. A search was instituted, and Theodora was found and recalled by her repentant husband from her refuge in Prenista.

In the full flush of his remorse and in the knowledge that he had been bewitched by an agent of the Devil Michael determined to make an example of his paramour. She was to be set up on an ass, beaten, insulted, and finally drawn and quartered. The pieces of her body should be thrown to the dogs. But Theodora herself intervened to prevent such savagery. Her humane and holy influence softened her husband's temper, and the witch was banished without further punishment.

Thenceforward Michael and Theodora lived in peace and in love, raising a family of three sons and three daughters. Theodora's piety and influence for good were so great that Michael was quite reformed; and to atone for his iniquities and to give thanks for his deliverance from the snares of the Devil he founded two monasteries, one at Galaxidi and the other, commonly known as the Kato Panagia, near Arta, which is inhabited to this day.⁵

Save for this pious tale little or nothing is known of the beginnings of Michael's career and the revival of the Despotate. But the tradition that he came back to Epiros soon after Theodore's defeat in 1230 can be partly substantiated. In the summer of 1231 two Genoese ambassadors, Nicholas Embriago and Guy Policino, were sent in a well-armed ship to negotiate with John Vatatzes and with 'Michael Commianus the Despot'; and it is significant that, among the principal enemies of John of Brienne between the years 1231 and 1235, the chronicler Philip Mouskes makes special mention of Michael. But during the first five years of his government the Despotate was at least nominally subordinate to the Kingdom of Thessalonike. Theodora, who was to make more than one attempt in later years to promote understanding between the Greeks of Epiros and the Greeks of Nicaea, was in exile, and Michael seems to have concerned himself only with local affairs.⁶

The politics of Thessalonike had their effect on Epiros also. Manuel's negotiations with the Patriarch of Nicaea in 1232 were conducted in the name of the Despotate as of the Kingdom of

Thessalonike. But in the following years Michael was able more and more to assert complete independence from the jurisdiction of Manuel and his successors. The revived Despotate flourished as the Kingdom of Thessalonike declined. The Nicene Patriarch, however, was determined that the Epirote Church should not once again defy his authority. Its bishops must be appointed and its affairs regulated either by the Patriarch himself or by his legates. The successor to John Apokaukos at Naupaktos, Niketas Choniates, a nephew of the former Metropolitan of Athens, was appointed from Nicaea without reference either to Michael or to Manuel; and the Exarch Christopher was actively engaged in ratifying the statutes of the monasteries in the diocese of Naupaktos. But the danger of a second 'revolt' of the clergy in Epiros must have been felt as Michael's power increased; for a few years later, about 1238, the Patriarch Germanos showed his hand in the most uncompromising manner by making a personal visit to Arta to establish his authority once and for all. Documentary evidence remains of this final assertion of the Patriarchal prerogative, and an inscription on the walls of a church near Arta still commemorates the event of the Patriarch's visit. The work begun by his legate in 1232 was completed by the Patriarch himself; and despite the growing political differences between Epiros and Nicaea, the clergy of the Despotate never again doubted the supremacy of the Nicene Patriarch.⁷

Michael's relationships with his uncle Manuel at Thessalonike appear to have been friendly. He was at first content to govern the territory formerly held by his father; and Manuel, beset by the intrigues of Bulgaria and Nicaea, must have been thankful for his services in the protection of Epiros and Akarnania. But with the gradual eclipse of the Kingdom of Thessalonike Michael ruled the Despotate in his own name and not as his uncle's deputy, and issued edicts under his own seals without reference to any higher authority.

By 1236 he was in control of Corfu, with or without the consent of Manuel, who only five years earlier had delegated the possession of the island to his sister in order to keep it in the family. One historian records that Michael made the seat of his Despotate in Corfu and fortified the castle of Butrinto on the mainland opposite. That he made it his capital is not true, but there is no

doubt that Michael, like his predecessors, attached the greatest importance to fostering the loyalty of the Corfiotes. In December, 1236, Michael confirmed by chrysobull the privileges originally granted to them by Isaac II, and renewed by Michael I and Manuel. Henceforth the townspeople (*Castrenses*) were to be completely exempt from the payment of taxes together with the peasants who worked their land (called the *Agraphi*), and their property was to be protected from the encroachments of the ubiquitous Vlachs. Those who lived outside the town (*Exocastrini*) were to be granted exemption from customs and import duties.⁸

A year later, in October 1237, Michael made an important commercial agreement with the merchants of Ragusa. The concessions that he granted to them were much more comprehensive than those contained in the decree of his father Michael I, to which he makes reference. They were to be allowed free access to all the ports of Epiros, and to do their business on equal terms with the Greeks. Michael guaranteed the inviolability of all citizens of Ragusa and their property while on Epirote soil, as well as the cargo of any of their ships that might be wrecked on Epirote shores. No mention was made of Manuel's similar agreement with Ragusa signed only three years before, and the omission was doubtless deliberate. Michael wished to emphasize that he was the lawful heir to the Despotate of Epiros, and was merely following the policy instituted by his father. Ragusa was at this time once again subject to the control of Venice. The commercial relationships between Venice and Epiros, which had been broken off in 1228, must by now have been re-established, since the people of Ragusa were granted the status of equal citizenship with the Corfiotes, and given special trading privileges in the island.⁹

Thus at least as early as 1236 northern Greece was split into the two separate dominions of Epiros and Thessalonike. The alliance of John Vatatzes with John Asen in 1235 had weakened still further the authority of the Kingdom of Thessalonike, and Michael began to consider himself at least an equal claimant to the imperial status that Theodore Angelos had assumed. On the seals that he appended to his charters to Corfu and Ragusa in 1236 and 1237 he appeared crowned and in the full imperial regalia, with the orb and sceptre in his hands; and the first was a

chrysobull signed in red ink after the manner of an Emperor. Thessalonike might sink to the rank of a puppet-Kingdom of Nicaea and Bulgaria, but the sovereignty of the western Greeks would be preserved in Epiros.¹⁰

In 1237, however, the scene was changed by the sudden re-appearance of Theodore. The Bulgarian King had fallen in love with Theodore's daughter Eirene, who inherited some of the charms of the Petraliphas family. He had recently become a widower and was in search of a second wife. He had temporarily ~~broken off his alliance with Nicaea following the death of John of Brienne~~ become the wife of John Asen. It was a convenient arrangement, particularly for Theodore. To exploit the charms of his only unmarried daughter in order to win the favour of his captor seems characteristic of Theodore's scheming mind. He had his reward as soon as the marriage had taken place. In 1237 he was released by his new son-in-law and given *carte blanche* to proceed to the recovery of Thessalonike and what remained of his former dominions. If Asen imagined that blindness and the effects of seven years' captivity would prove a serious handicap to an insatiable ambition he greatly underestimated Theodore's energy and resourcefulness.¹¹

As soon as he was set free Theodore made straight for Thessalonike. Asen had allowed him little more than a bodyguard, and he could hardly hope to storm the walls. But he had many friends within the city, and many who were indebted to him for past benefactions, and he relied on their support. He disguised himself in rags, slipped unnoticed through the gates, and soon spread word of his return. A conspiracy was formed, and Manuel was dethroned and made a prisoner. Theodore was once again master of Thessalonike. Because of his blindness he declined to wear the crown himself. Instead he invested his son John with the emblems of royalty, binding on his feet the scarlet sandals, and commanding him to sign his documents in the imperial red and govern his territory as a King. The Kingdom of Thessalonike entered on a new phase, but the ceremony of coronation was never

re-enacted. Theodore was the power behind the throne, and the crown that was his by right of conquest lay uneasily on the head of his young and innocent son.

The unfortunate Manuel was sent into exile in Attalia on the southern coast of Asia Minor, accompanied by an escort to make sure that he did not deviate from his course. His wife Maria was sent back to Bulgaria to be looked after by her father John Asen, an act calculated to make the Bulgarian King even more well-disposed towards Theodore. For, in the words of Akropolites, 'Asen loved his father-in-law Theodore more than his son Manuel; while the feelings he bore to his wife Eirene can be compared only with the love of Anthony for Cleopatra'.

But Manuel thirsted for revenge. In Attalia he persuaded the Turkish authorities to grant him free passage and means of transport through their country to the court of John Vatatzes at Nicaea. Vatatzes received him warmly and in a manner fitting to his dignity, and before long supplied him with six ships and a quantity of money with which to make his way back to Greece. As a reward for this generosity Vatatzes, 'with his usual shrewdness and insight', obliged Manuel to swear a solemn oath of loyalty to Nicaea. If the expedition proved a success then Thessalonike would henceforth be under suzerainty to Nicaea. If it proved a failure not much would be lost.

Early in 1239 Manuel crossed over from Asia Minor and landed in the Gulf of Volos. Supported perhaps by Constantine Melis-senos, the local governor, he made his headquarters in the district of Demetrias. He had little difficulty either by pay or by promises in raising a fair number of troops; and he was soon in control of Pharsala, Larissa, and Platamona in central Thessaly.

This unexpected turn of events upset Theodore's calculations. He must now either fight a civil war against his brother or pacify him by some major concession. In the end Manuel took the initiative and entered into negotiations. A treaty was signed, and Theodore, Manuel, and Constantine formed a coalition. Manuel was persuaded, if not compelled, by his brothers to break his oath of loyalty to Nicaea, and the administration of the country was divided to the satisfaction of all three. Manuel retained control of Thessaly, perhaps in partnership with Constantine, and Theodore contented himself with the fortresses of Vodena

or Edessa, Staridola, and Ostrovon to the west of Thessalonike. Manuel's hopes of vengeance were thus thwarted, and the money and ships he had brought from Nicaea were turned to the advantage of the Kingdom of Thessalonike. John Angelos continued to carry the title if not the authority of King, executing his father's wishes to the best of his ability; and as a security measure Theodore and Manuel made alliances with Villehardouin of the Morea, whose suzerainty Manuel had already acknowledged, and with the Venetian governors of Euboea. This was a tactful move, since one of the triarchs of Euboea, William of Verona, had acquired a claim to the throne of Thessalonike through his marriage to Helen, a niece of the late King Demetrios of Montferrat, a claim that was recognized as his right by the Latin Emperor but never substantiated.

The coalition was intended to accommodate only the claimants to the Kingdom of Thessalonike. It did not include Michael of Epiros. Michael continued to pursue his own policy, and while his uncles were bargaining with each other and making alliances with the Franks and Venetians, he himself was renewing the friendship of Epiros with a powerful enemy of the Latin Empire. In December 1239 he sent ambassadors to the court of the Emperor Frederick II in Italy. Frederick's other commitments had made it necessary for him to abandon any idea that he may have had of imperialistic expansion in the east; and in August of the same year he had finally ceded back to the family of Montferrat his title to the Kingdom of Thessalonike. The purpose of Michael's embassy to him is not known, but it may be conjectured that Michael was in search of support against the allies that had been enlisted on the side of Thessalonike.¹²

The year 1241 marks a turning point in the history of the relationships between Greece and Nicaea, for it saw the death not only of Manuel, who had done his best to be loyal to Vatatzes, but also of John Asen, who was virtually protector of the Kingdom of Thessalonike and Theodore's most influential supporter. Manuel's territory in Thessaly passed at once into the hands of Michael II. There is no indication that Manuel bequeathed it to his nephew, and it would be reasonable to suppose that his own brother Constantine had a prior claim. Michael seems merely to have seized the opportunity to march into Thessaly and make

himself master of the district before either Theodore or Constantine had time to prevent him. John Angelos remained as ruler of a yet smaller Kingdom of Thessalonike.

The death of John Asen brought to the Bulgarian throne his son Kaliman, who was only seven years old. Kaliman's first act was to pay his respects to John Vatatzes. The Latin Empire had passed in 1240 to Baldwin II, a monarch somewhat older but not much more competent than Kaliman, who was soon obliged to sell all that he had to maintain his precarious position behind the walls of Constantinople. Neither the Bulgarians nor the Latins could challenge the sovereignty of Nicaea or match the ability of its Emperor. Partly through his own efforts and partly through the misfortunes of others John Vatatzes had risen to a position of pre-eminence. The restoration of Byzantium seemed again to be in sight. But the rival claims of Greece and Nicaea had first to be settled. The antagonism of the two independent states, which had hitherto confined itself to words, now broke out into open war; and it was now that the long succession of campaigns directed from Nicaea first against Thessalonike and then against Epiros began—campaigns which sapped the resources and exhausted the energies of the divided Greek states until the very purpose of their existence seemed forgotten.¹³

The initiative was taken by Vatatzes. The time seemed ripe for putting an end to the pretensions of the Kingdom of Thessalonike, and it was imperative to forestall any attempt on the part of the western Greeks to profit from the weaknesses of Bulgaria or Constantinople. So long as Manuel Angelos had held the throne some kind of understanding had been possible between Greece and Nicaea. But his nephew and successor John had more exalted ideas of his status in Thessalonike. John Angelos was a fervently religious man who devoted himself to the service of the Church and cherished the desire to enter a monastery; but his father Theodore, who had put him on the throne, flattered his religious zeal by encouraging him to think of his crown as a gift from God to the one true Emperor of the Romans. John himself was a mystic and not a soldier, but his policy like his ambition, was guided by his father, whose abilities as a soldier were too well known to be ignored. Under Theodore's guidance the Kingdom of Thessalonike was an annoyance as well as a danger to Nicaea.

If his father could be removed from the scene once again, John Angelos might easily be reduced to a humbler status. Vatatzes decided to achieve this object by a piece of cunning worthy of Theodore himself. In 1241 Theodore received a cordial invitation to visit the court of Nicaea. It was unlike him to be led so simply into a trap, but he accepted. The Emperor was delighted to entertain so honoured a guest, but reluctant to let him go. He danced attendance on Theodore, addressing him as his uncle, and feasting him at his own table, until preparations for an expedition against Thessalonike had been completed.¹⁴

By the beginning of 1242 all was ready. In the spring Vatatzes crossed the Hellespont, taking Theodore with him. The campaign had been carefully planned, and his army, augmented by a detachment of the savage Cumans whom he had recently succeeded in winning over from the service of the Latins, was commanded by several of the principal figures at the court of Nicaea. Many of them were destined to bring distinction upon themselves in the inconclusive campaigns into Macedonia which dragged on intermittently for the next twenty years. Among them were Demetrios Tornikes, then a high administrative official, Andronikos Palaiologos, the Great Domestic and second-in-command, Alexios Raoul the Protovestiarios, Nikephoros Tarchaniotes, and John Petraliphas. A fleet under the command of Manuel Kontophre sailed along the coast, while the army marched through Thrace and eastern Macedonia without encountering opposition, passing through Kavalla and up to the valley of the Strymon. The castle of Rendina on the other side of the river was occupied by a detachment of the army of John Angelos. But the garrison deserted its post and fled without waiting to be attacked. The road to Thessalonike lay open, and Vatatzes marched to the outskirts of the city. His army was not strong enough to force an entry, and he encamped in an orchard not far away, giving his troops full permission to devastate the surrounding countryside, an operation in which the Cuman auxiliaries excelled themselves. The defenders struck back with varying success in a series of counter raids.

Thessalonike was to be blockaded into surrender. But only a few days after his arrival news reached Vatatzes of a new and serious danger nearer home. The Mongols had invaded Asia

Minor and were reported to be attacking the Turkish Sultanate of Konia. The threat to Nicaea seemed imminent, and the Emperor's return was imperative. Matters at Thessalonike must be brought to a hasty conclusion. Vatatzes decided to come to terms, and sent Theodore as his envoy into the city to negotiate with John Angelos; but he kept the news from Nicaea as a close secret so that neither Theodore nor John should know that his army was about to withdraw.

Under the circumstances it was impossible for Vatatzes to demand the complete surrender of Thessalonike; but he would be content if John Angelos would resign the title of Emperor and accept that of Despot. John, who cared little for the things of this world, might willingly have opened the gates of his city on such terms if left to his own devices. But his father Theodore, after much discussion, eventually persuaded him not to surrender more than was necessary. John swore an oath of loyalty to Nicaea, and laid aside the symbols of the imperium, the scarlet sandals and the ruby-topped pyramid of pearls, taking in exchange the title and dignity of Despot, and professing himself well-disposed towards the Emperor Vatatzes.

By this act the Kingdom of Thessalonike was humiliated eighteen years after its foundation. John Vatatzes, having showered gifts on his late enemy, hurried back to the east in the winter of 1242 confident that he had achieved his purpose. To have deprived an Emperor of his title was a great moral victory, and there was now no question of a rival claimant to the heritage of the Byzantine throne. But the Despotate had suffered no loss of strength or territory, and if Vatatzes had had the time and the confidence to annex and occupy Thessalonike as a part of his own Kingdom he would have saved himself and his successors the expense of several campaigns. For the old ambitions of the Despots were by no means thwarted; and Theodore, whom Vatatzes rashly left behind him in Thessalonike, as well as Michael II of Epiros, were soon to prove that their success did not depend only on a title.¹⁵

¹⁴ Job Monachus, *Life of St. Theodora of Arta*, ed. Mustoxidi, *Hellenomnenon* (1843), pp. 42-7; ed. Migne, P.G., vol. 127, pp. 903-8; ed. Buchon, *Nouvelles Recherches*, vol. II, pp. 401-6. Chronicle of Galaxidi, ed. Sathas, pp. 197-200; ed. G. Valetas (Athens 1944), pp. 110-14.

² Constantine was certainly in Akarnania in 1229 (see above, p. 72, n. 32 for his recorded benefactions to the Monastery of Varnakova), but he is not mentioned again until 1240, when he was attached to Thessalonike (Akropolites 65. See p. 135).

³ Of the other daughters of John Petraliphas, one (Maria) married Sphrantzes (?Francesco), a son of Maio Orsini, the other married Alexios Slav, the Bulgarian Despot of Melnik. A son, Theodore, married the daughter of Demetrios Tornikes, Grand Logothete of Theodore I Laskaris at Nicaea. Akropolites 39, 90, 140. See below, Appendix on the Petraliphas Family, p. 215.

⁴ Theodora's eldest son was Nikephoros. Michael had two illegitimate sons by Gangrene, Theodore and John. The Monastery of St. Nicholas at Prenista is traditionally supposed to have been Theodora's place of refuge, and the concave stone that served for her bed is pointed out. See Serapheim, *Δοκίμιον ιστορικής τέλος περιήψεως τῆς . . . Αρτης . . .*, p. 17.

⁵ See below, Chapter 12, pp. 199-201.

⁶ Bartholomaeus Scriba (M.G.H. XVIII), p. 177. *Annales Januenses di Caffaro, ed. C. Imperiale, Fonti per la Storia d'Italia*, vol. III, p. 57. Philip Mouskes 29039-43: 'Vatace et li rois Ausens, Li Micalis et li Coumain . . .'

⁷ Document concerning the Church of St. Michael in the village of Pteri, published by V. Laurent, *op. cit.*, *Revue des Etudes byzantines*, XII (1954), p. 108, and pp. 112-13. For the inscription, on the Church of the Παναγία τοῦ Μπρωνή see below, Chapter 12, pp. 198-9.

⁸ This chrysobull is described in a diploma of Charles III of Durazzo (1382), in N. Barone, *Notizie storiche di Re Carlo III di Durazzo*, Appendix, pp. 61-4. See also P. Lemerle, *Trois Actes du Despote d'Epire Michel II concernant Corfu*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (Thessalonike 1953), no. 1, pp. 414-18. Michael's reference to Manuel as 'perambabilis nostri patris (=patrui) despota domini Manuela ducis . . .' would seem to indicate that there was an understanding over his possession of Corfu.

⁹ Miklosich and Müller, III, no. 15, p. 67. M. Markovic, Byzantine sources in the Archives of Dubrovnik, *Sbornik Radova (XXI)*, *Vizantoloski Institut*, I (Belgrade 1952), no. II, pp. 220-4, and Plates 3 and 4. This agreement with Ragusa was renewed by Michael in 1266 (or 1251). See below, p. 193. Minotto, *Acta et Diplomata e Tabulario Veneto*, I, i, p. 20. P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (1953), no. 9, pp. 411-12 and references. K. Jireček, *Eine Urkunde von 1238-1240 zur Geschichte von Corfu*, *B.Z.*, I (1891), pp. 336-7 (from which it appears that Corfu was then administered by two governors, Kaloioarnes Komnenos and Vatatzes, although the text is very obscure).

¹⁰ See T. Bertelé, *Una Moneta dei Despoti di Epiro*, *B.Z.*, 44 (1951), pp. 25-6. Markovic, *op. cit.*, pp. 220-4. P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, pp. 417-18. See below, pp. 210-11.

¹¹ Akropolites 60. Asen had three children by Eirene: Michael, the successor to the Bulgarian throne, Maria, and Theodora (or Anna). See Ephraim 8390.

¹² Akropolites 60-2. Ephraim 8351-72. Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 176-7. Staridola is identified by Leake (*Travels in Northern Greece*, vol. I, pp. 311-12) with the marsh of Sarigol to the north of Kozani. Meliarakes (p. 332, note 1) accuses Akropolites of confusing Constantine with Michael II. But Akropolites makes the identity of this Constantine quite clear by calling him the brother of Theodore and the uncle of Michael II. He is not heard of again after this date. For Michael's embassy to Frederick II, see Huillard-Breholles, *Historia Diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, vol. V, pp. 586, 630. See also San Georgio (R.I.S. XXIII), *Historia Montiserratis*, pp. 383-5; S. Borsari, Federico II e l'Oriente bizantino, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 63 (1951), p. 283. Hopf, *Geschichte Griechenlands*, p. 258, says that Asen and Vatatzes both sent embassies to Frederick in the same year. See Norden, *Papsttum und Byzanz*, p. 332.

¹³ Akropolites 64. Ephraim 8384-93. Alberic of Trois Fontaines 950. See Meliarakes, p. 333; Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, p. 182.

¹⁴ The coins minted by John Angelos at Thessalonike throw a very interesting light on his conception of himself as divinely-appointed Emperor. See T. Bertelé, *L'Imperatore alato nella Numismatica Bizantina*, Collana di Studi Numismatici, Rome 1951; and see below, Chapter 12, pp. 206-8.

¹⁵ Akropolites 65-7, 70-1. Ephraim 8407-54, 8471-4. Gregoras, I, 37.

CHAPTER 8

MICHAEL II ANGELOS, DESPOT JOHN III VATATZES, EMPEROR

1244-54

IN 1244 John Angelos died, and Theodore, who was again directing the affairs of Thessalonike from his castle at Vodena, nominated as his successor his younger son Demetrios. The change of rulers was formally announced by embassy to Nicaea; and Vatatzes, who enjoyed this mark of respect to his uncertain suzerainty over Thessalonike, confirmed the right of Demetrios Angelos to the title of Despot and to the possession of all the territory formerly included in the Kingdom.

In character Demetrios was a complete contrast to his brother John. He was a gay and dissolute adolescent who enjoyed nothing better than the company of other young men of equally depraved habits. His life was devoted to amusement and debauchery, and his lameness in one leg, the result of leaping from a window when surprised in an act of adultery, was a permanent testimony to his profligate nature. His policy was doubtless guided by his father; but it was inevitable that his personal recklessness and the favouritism that he showed to his extravagant young friends should provoke a reaction among some of his subjects. There were those who began to feel that their own interests would be better served if Thessalonike were simply attached to the Kingdom of Nicaea instead of clinging to the shadow of a former glory.¹

Under the rule of Demetrios the Despotate of Thessalonike seemed doomed to disintegrate and perish as an independent state. But the collapse of Thessalonike left the way open for Michael of Epiros. The greater part of Thessaly had already passed under Michael's control; but the Venetians had seized the opportunity of Manuel's death to establish themselves once again on the Gulf of Volos. Constantine Melissenos, the Greek governor of the district, again took refuge in Epiros and encouraged Michael to lead a campaign for the recovery of his territory from the 'Greek-eating Latins'. It was not until the spring of

1246 that an Epirote army finally marched into southern Thessaly and drove the Venetians from Volos and Halmyros.

Geoffrey II of Villehardouin died in the same year, and Michael made an attempt to profit from the occasion by invading the Frankish Duchy of Athens and Thebes. His army penetrated no further than Lamia. The Marquis of Boudonitz, who controlled the northern frontiers of the Duchy, summoned his new liege lord William of Villehardouin, who had succeeded to the Principality of Achaia. Michael's attack was driven back by William in person at the head of a force of eight thousand cavalry. The Epirotes retired across the valley of the Spercheios and never again invaded the territory of the Franks.²

Before returning to Arta Michael rewarded the family of Melissenos for their loyalty by confirming them in possession of their hereditary estates in southern Thessaly. Constantine Melissenos, who had twice defied the Latins, had recently married Maria, one of Michael's sisters, and had been honoured with the title of Despot. The Monastery of the Virgin at Makrinitza on the slopes of Pelion, which owed to him its foundation, was his especial interest; and Michael now added to its dependencies the Monastery of Hilarion near Halmyros, which had been presented to Constantine by Theodore's wife, Maria Petraliphas. The chrysobull signed in May 1246, with which Michael authorized the deed, records the fortunes of the Monastery during the régime of Berthold of Katzenellenbogen as Count of Velestino. Its official transference to the care of Constantine's Monastery was the first of many acts demonstrating the conspicuous piety of the Melissenos family.³

Michael's use of the golden bull was an advertisement to the Greek world of the increasing importance of the Despotate of Epiros. He had not yet presumed to adopt the title of Emperor, but his sense of his own dignity rose as the fortunes of Thessalonike waned. Two other chrysobulls were signed by his hand in 1246. They concerned the people of Corfu, whose loyalty Michael had confirmed by the grant of special privileges ten years before, and more particularly the status of the Orthodox Church in the island. Since the time of Pediadites and Bardanes the clergy had been strong supporters of the Despotate. But with the expansion of Nicaea at the expense of Thessalonike their allegiance might

waver. It was necessary for Michael to keep their support and encourage them to look to Arta rather than Nicaea as their capital, even though their spiritual authority might derive from the Nicene Patriarchate.

His first chrysobull, issued in January 1246, confirmed and extended the privileges of the thirty-two priests of the town of Corfu who, under the name of the 'Sacred Band', formed a religious college or corporation which had enjoyed a specially privileged status since at least the time of Manuel I Komnenos. By Michael's decree they were to be independent of the jurisdiction of the governor and magistrates of the town, and even of their own Metropolitan except in spiritual matters. They were to be free from all public taxes and contributions towards the maintenance of the fleet, to be allowed to sell their produce freely in the market, and to be exempt, at least in part, from the 'akrostichon' or land tax payable by the clergy. These concessions were to be guaranteed against the introduction of any new legislation, and in return the college of the Sacred Band was required to offer prayers without ceasing for the prosperity of Orthodox kings and rulers.

Michael's second chrysobull, signed in February of the same year, was complementary to the first, and granted the same privileges to thirty-three of the rural clergy (*ἐκ τῶν ἀγρῶν*) of Corfu. As a result they, too, became a closed corporation, known as the 'Freemen' (*Λευθεριῶται*), to which none but members of their own families might be elected on pain of severe penalties. These concessions helped to uphold the position of the Orthodox Church in Corfu, and Michael's chrysobulls were cited as charters of freedom by the Greek priests of the island long after it had passed into Italian hands. Coupled with the privileges granted to the citizens in 1236 they secured Corfu as a loyal mandate of the Despotate until it was annexed to the Kingdom of Sicily some twelve years later. The two documents throw some light on the administration of the island at this time, and show that the system of dividing Corfu into ten decarchies, instituted by the Venetians in 1209, was continued under the Despotate in a modified form.⁴

Meanwhile the Kingdom of Nicaea was rapidly adding to its strength and prestige, and it seemed inevitable that Thessalonike

would soon be included within its boundaries. John Vatatzes had been consolidating his position by alliances and conquests. The Mongols, whose invasion of Asia Minor had necessitated the Emperor's withdrawal from Thessalonike in 1242, had retired as suddenly as they had appeared. But the sense of common danger from the east had prompted an alliance between the Turks and the Greeks. A treaty had been signed in the autumn of 1243 between the Seljuk Sultan Khaikosrau and the Emperors of Nicaea and Trebizond. The weight of the Mongol attack had been borne by the Turks. Khaikosrau had been defeated in battle and forced to pay tribute. The Greek Emperor of Trebizond bowed to the inevitable and accepted Mongol suzerainty. But Nicaea was relatively unaffected; and the alliance with the Turks secured the eastern boundaries of the Kingdom more firmly than ever before.⁵

In the west Vatatzes had engineered a valuable alliance with the Emperor Frederick II. As the enemy of the Papacy and so of the Latin Empire Frederick found himself in sympathy with the Greeks; and his friendship was much sought after. He had perhaps neither time nor interest enough to take sides in the quarrel between Epiros and Nicaea. The western Greeks were nearer neighbours. He had been on friendly terms with Theodore Angelos, had corresponded with Manuel, and had already received an embassy from Michael of Epiros. But he was prepared to give support to whichever of the exiled rulers of Byzantium happened to be in the ascendancy; and he hoped that they in return would give him material as well as moral support in his own conflict. Vatatzes had been in correspondence with Frederick at least since 1238, and had held out the promise of great rewards if Frederick would help to liberate Constantinople from the Latins. In 1244 their relationship was strengthened by the marriage of Vatatzes to Frederick's daughter Constance; and in the same year Frederick's influence at Nicaea was so well known that the Latin Emperor, Baldwin II, who was then in Italy, could ask him to act as intermediary in negotiating a truce of one year with John Vatatzes.⁶

The Kingdom of Nicaea had never been in a stronger position. In the summer of 1246 Vatatzes crossed over to Europe to make a tour of inspection of his territory in Thrace. As a result of his

campaign of 1242 his European boundaries had been extended as far west as Zichna, on the road between Drama and Serres. But only the coast-line of Thrace, from the Maritza to the Strymon, belonged to Nicaea. To the north lay the Bulgarian Empire, and to the west of the Strymon the vassal state of Thessalonike. Vatatzes was nominally in alliance with the boy-King Kaliman of Bulgaria, and he had at first no intention of trespassing on Bulgarian soil. But in September 1246, when he had gone no further than the Maritza river, he got word that Kaliman had died. The temptation to invade Bulgaria and appropriate some of the land that had been conquered from the Latin Empire by Theodore Angelos and John Asen proved strong. The successor to the Bulgarian throne was the young Michael, son of John Asen and Eirene, and nephew of Demetrios of Thessalonike. Under the regency of Eirene the Bulgarian Empire could offer little resistance. There was some difference of opinion among the officers of the Nicene army about the ethics of attacking a relatively defenceless Kingdom with which the Emperor was supposed to be in alliance. But Vatatzes, supported by his Great Domestic Andronikos Palaiologos, was determined not to let the opportunity slip.

He marched rapidly west through Kavalla to Philippi, and attacked Serres. The town was defended by one Dragotas, who retreated to the citadel and surrendered after a short siege. The gateway to western Macedonia was now open, and Vatatzes, despite the small number of his troops, carried all before him. In the space of three months he had occupied all the country to the north of Serres, from Melnik as far as Velbužd (Kjustendil) in the Strymon valley, and up to Stenimachos and Tzepaina on the Maritza. To the east he conquered Stip, Skoplje, and the towns of Ovčepolje, marched south through the Monastir gap from Veles and Prilep to Pelagonia, and captured the fortress of Prosek in the valley of the Vardar. By the middle of November 1246 the whole of southern and south-western Bulgaria was at least superficially annexed to Nicaea; and the treaty which Vatatzes made with Michael Asen informed him of the amended boundaries of the Bulgarian Empire.⁷

Akropolites has left a detailed account of this campaign, and it is clear that although Vatatzes came as far south as Pelagonia

and Prosek he had no intention of trying to dislodge Theodore Angelos from his rocky estate at Vodena. Michael Asen's mother Eirene was allowed to retire to the court of her brother Demetrios at Thessalonike; and it appears that Vatatzes, having successfully isolated the tiny remnant of the Kingdom of Thessalonike, meant to withdraw from Macedonia. The campaigning season was over, and there seemed to be no reason for interfering in the affairs of his now humiliated rivals. Once again, however, he was given an unexpected opportunity. He was encamped at Melnik when rumours reached him of a conspiracy against the Despot of Thessalonike.

The young Demetrios Angelos had shown no inclination to mend his ways since he had been raised to a position of authority. His reckless and extravagant habits and his dissolute character made him many enemies, and the pro-Nicene party in Thessalonike gained ground. A plot was hatched to get rid of Demetrios and to invite Vatatzes to occupy the city while he was in Macedonia. Prominent among the conspirators were two members of the aristocracy called Spartenos and Kampanos. They were supported by Michael Laskaris, the uncle of Vatatzes, who had been appointed as the Emperor's ambassador at the court of Thessalonike. The sentiments of the conspirators were perhaps not shared by the majority of the citizens, who may have felt that the rule of a native Despot, however reckless, was preferable to that of a foreign Emperor. Demetrios was tolerated if only because he was the son of Theodore. But the plans for betraying the city to Nicaea were made with such secrecy and cunning that neither Demetrios nor Theodore suspected anything. Kampanos was sent up to the Nicene camp at Melnik ostensibly on private business. His real purpose was to negotiate with Vatatzes for the signing of a chrysobull to the effect that, if Demetrios were deposed and Thessalonike handed over to Nicaea, the Emperor would guarantee the ancient rights and privileges of the city and also the freedom and security of the conspirators. The opportunity was too good to be missed. Vatatzes willingly gave his full support and promised ample rewards for the ringleaders if the plot were successful.

Late in November 1246 he led his army down from Melnik towards Thessalonike. He sent ambassadors ahead to order

Demetrios to come forth and do homage to his Emperor according to the oath that he had sworn two years before. Demetrios, persuaded by the conspirators that the Emperor was only laying a trap to catch him, refused to leave the city; and Vatatzes drew nearer. The conspiracy almost came to grief when some details leaked out concerning the 'mysterious messages and words' exchanged between Kampanos and the Emperor at Melnik. Kampanos was brought to trial before Demetrios. But his friend Spartenos cleverly saved the situation by offering with great show of loyalty to extract the truth from the 'traitor' with his own hands. Having dragged him to his house he then fell to with resounding lashes on a blown-up skin, to give the impression to those within earshot that the unhappy Kampanos was being beaten into making a confession. Demetrios was deceived by this elementary guile, and Kampanos, having nothing to confess, was absolved from the charge of treachery.

Vatatzes encamped outside the walls and sent a second ultimatum for Demetrios to present himself, and to supply provisions for the imperial army. The order was again ignored. Vatatzes had not sufficient troops to lay siege to the city, and he had no means of judging the strength of the conspiracy. But a few days later, during a skirmish by the walls, a cry went up that the sea-gate had been opened from inside. The Nicene army, led by the Emperor himself, marched straight into the city.

Vatatzes was master of Thessalonike. It remained to deal with the rebel Demetrios who had defied his authority. Doubtless his punishment would have been severe but for the intercession of his sister Eirene. The Emperor had scarcely entered the gates when Eirene fell on her knees before him and implored him at least to spare the eyesight of her young brother. Vatatzes, like the Bulgarian King before him, was moved by her beauty, and did her the honour of getting down from his chariot to stand beside her. He swore to respect her wishes and to deal leniently with her brother. Demetrios, fearing the worst, had taken refuge in the citadel. But Eirene, having obtained the promise that she wanted from the Emperor, persuaded him to give himself up. He was taken captive, and later imprisoned in Asia Minor.⁸

It was now December, and Vatatzes could spend only a few days in Thessalonike. Before leaving he appointed garrison

commanders and governors in all the towns and fortresses that he had acquired. The command of Thessalonike and Berroia was committed to the able hands of the Great Domestic Andronikos Palaiologos, to whom all the other commanders were to be answerable; while the district of Serres and Melnik was entrusted to the son of Andronikos, Michael Palaiologos, who was soon to make a more lasting name for himself on the pages of Byzantine history. The Despotate of Thessalonike was no more, and what little remained of its former dominions was annexed to the Kingdom of Nicaea, or, as *Akropolites* would have it, to the Greeks, the rebels in whose midst had been defeated. The greatest source of rivalry to the Nicene throne had at last been suppressed; and with his own garrison installed in Thessalonike, Vatatzes seemed well able to check the ambitions of Michael of Epiros and to destroy once and for all any hope that the western Greeks may have retained of securing the prize of Constantinople for themselves.

Vatatzes left for Asia Minor early in 1247. Theodore Angelos, who was still living in his castle at Vodena within striking distance of Thessalonike, seemed to be powerless. He was blind, elderly, and without an army; and the city was well defended. Michael of Epiros was a more serious danger, but any expedition against him required a considerably larger army than Vatatzes had at his disposal. Michael was in fact master of an extent of territory almost as great as that ruled by Vatatzes himself. What the Kingdom of Thessalonike had lost the Despotate of Epiros had been quick to appropriate; and Michael, like Vatatzes, had profited from the situation in Bulgaria to restore his influence over Albania and Durazzo, and to recover much of the Macedonian territory lost to John Asen in 1230. By the time of the final collapse of Thessalonike the Despotate of Epiros and the Kingdom of Nicaea had their first common boundary in the mountains of Ochrida, Prilep, and Pelagonia. Michael was now in direct contact with Theodore at Vodena; and to the south and south-west of Thessalonike his authority was recognized over the greater part of Thessaly, from Larissa and Volos to Platamona and Servia. The Kingdom of Thessalonike was dead. But the heritage of its ephemeral glory was bequeathed to Michael of Epiros; and it was not without justification that he began to think of reviving the

claim of the western Greeks to the imperium, with himself as Emperor.⁹

On its way back to Asia Minor in 1247 the Nicene army marched as far towards Constantinople as the towns of Tzurulon and Bizye. The Latin Empire appeared to be dying and its capital invited attack. Vatatzes soon made efforts to weaken its resistance still further. He sent envoys to the Pope and to his father-in-law Frederick II to dissuade them from giving help to the Latin Emperor Baldwin II, who was touring the courts of Europe ~~cap in hand~~. The Pope replied by sending a legate to Nicaea to discuss once again the question of the union of the Greek and Roman Churches. But Frederick II was more ready to give, and to receive, practical assistance.

These diplomatic negotiations might well have been the prelude to the restoration of the Byzantine Empire by John Vatatzes. The boundaries of the Kingdom of Nicaea were now secure on all fronts. The only doubtful quantity in its chain of alliances and conquests was the Despotate of Epiros. If Michael II could now be persuaded to sink his pride there was a chance that the Greeks might be re-united round their capital. Vatatzes decided to adopt a new approach to the problem. He proposed that the ruling families of Epiros and Nicaea should be joined by marriage. In the summer of 1249 he suggested that his granddaughter Maria should be betrothed to Michael's eldest son, Nikephoros, who was then eighteen years of age.

Michael may have been impressed by the recent negotiations and alliance between Vatatzes and Frederick II, and concluded that it might be wise after all to connect his interests with those of Nicaea. But the initiative was taken by his wife, the saintly Theodora. Theodora's influence in affairs of state seems to have been considerable, and her policy was frequently at variance with her husband's ambitions. It may well have been her wish to prevent Michael from wasting the country's resources on rash attempts to recover Thessalonike by fostering a peaceful union between Epiros and Nicaea. Whatever Michael's opinion Theodora at least was determined to accept the offer made by Vatatzes and effect the alliance. She took the law into her own hands and set out with her son to find the Emperor. Vatatzes was at Pegai on the coast of Asia Minor, and he received his visitors

there in a manner fitting to their dignity. Theodora personally supervised the solemnization of the vows of betrothal in his presence, and having made arrangements for the marriage ceremony to be performed in the following year she returned with Nikephoros to Arta.¹⁰

For a last brief moment it seemed that the Greeks of east and west might combine towards the recovery of their capital. Michael was soon afterwards obliged to give proof of his loyalty to Nicaea in order to keep the friendship of a strong supporter of the Despote. In February 1250 the Emperor Frederick II wrote to him asking him to grant the favour of a free passage through his dominions to a body of infantry and archers that Vatatzes was sending to the help of the Kingdom of Sicily. It would have been impolitic to refuse such a request. Vatatzes had been more successful than Michael in his dealings with Frederick, and his marriage to Frederick's daughter might have seemed to indicate that Frederick was now on the side of Nicaea. But Michael was not prepared to risk his displeasure. He consented; and for the first time a Nicene army marched unimpeded through Epiros to Durazzo.¹¹

Whether these demonstrations of good will on Michael's part were genuine, or whether, as the Byzantine historians suggest, they were merely a blind to his ulterior purposes, is hard to decide. But it is evident that Michael's policy at this time was at the mercy of two opposing influences, the one that of his virtuous wife, the other that of his scheming uncle. Hardly had Theodora made the alliance with Vatatzes when Theodore persuaded her husband to reject it. The historians lay the blame for this act of treachery on Michael's innate wickedness. Akropolites makes some sententious remarks to the effect that the leopard cannot change his spots. But more probably it was his uncle who brought out the worst in Michael and incited him to break faith with Vatatzes. To Theodore the thought of a marital alliance between the Angeloi and the Kingdom of Nicaea must have been peculiarly irksome.

Barely a year after Theodora returned from her peace-mission to Pegai Michael was already plotting a plan of campaign with his uncle at Vodena. As they must well have realized the armies of the Kingdom of Nicaea were otherwise unoccupied. Bulgaria

was peaceful, and the Turkish Sultan continued to observe the terms of the alliance that he had made. Vatatzes might attack Constantinople at any moment unless his attention could be diverted. In 1251 Michael launched a surprise attack in the direction of Thessalonike. The city had a strong garrison, but Vatatzes, realizing almost too late the folly of having underestimated Theodore's influence and ingenuity, decided to take no chances. The coalition of Michael and Theodore was a possibility that he had not foreseen. It was an annoying and it might be a dangerous development; and the expense of a major expedition against them would bring its own reward, for by reducing both Michael and Theodore to terms he could bring the whole of northern Greece under the single rule of Nicaea.

In the spring of 1252 Vatatzes set out across the Hellespont once again, this time at the head of a considerable army. Several of his generals had already had valuable military experience in Macedonia. At Serres he was joined by Michael Palaiologos, and from there marched to Thessalonike. Theodore and Michael had meanwhile advanced as far as the Vardar valley north of the city and captured the towns of Prilep and Veles. But they had not expected their challenge to be so promptly and purposefully taken up; and they quickly withdrew over the mountains and made for Epiros by way of Kastoria. From Thessalonike Vatatzes advanced on Vodena, and the garrison there, deserted by their leader, surrendered after a short siege. The imperial army encamped a little further to the west by the shores of Lake Ostrovon, and a detachment was sent in the direction of Kastoria and Prespa to draw the enemy's fire and plunder the countryside. But the main body of the enemy was nowhere to be found, and the campaign deteriorated into an ineffectual guerilla warfare in the hills of Kastoria.

As the winter of 1252 drew on Vatatzes was hard pressed to maintain his camp at Ostrovon. Supplies had to be fetched by mule and camel from Berroia, a good distance away, and his troops began to show signs of unrest. It seemed that nothing was being achieved. The situation was saved by the sudden desertion of two of Michael's generals, Glabas and Theodore Petraliphas, who abandoned their garrison in Kastoria and marched over the mountains to give themselves up to Vatatzes at Ostrovon. The

surrender of Theodore Petraliphas, who was not only Michael's brother-in-law but also a son-in-law of Demetrios Tornikes, the late Grand Logothete and much honoured friend of the court of Nicaea, was particularly encouraging to Vatatzes and greatly raised the morale of his troops.¹²

In the depth of winter the imperial army took command of Kastoria and pressed on up the valley of the Devol river towards Lake Malik and the Lake of Ochrida. They had barely crossed the frontiers of Albania when Golem, the chieftain of Kroia and Elbassan, who had been helping Michael's army in the region of Kastoria, surrendered himself and his soldiers to Vatatzes. The rulers of Albania had kept up a long tradition of friendliness towards the Despotate, but since the final loss of Thessalonike their policy had been more hesitant, and their loyalties wavered between Serbia, Rome, and Nicaea. Golem was connected by marriage both with the royal house of Serbia, and with Eirene the first wife of Vatatzes. His uncle, Stephen Uroš of Serbia, had entered into alliance with Nicaea soon after he came to the throne in 1243; and Golem, tempted and flattered by secret messages from the Emperor, and seeing for the first time the full strength of the army of Nicaea, thought it prudent to follow his example. The outcome was the temporary detachment from the Despotate of most of Albania.¹³

The loss of his Albanian ally, following on the desertion of Glabas and Petraliphas, seriously weakened Michael's position; and rather than risk a total defeat he decided to ask for peace and accept whatever terms the Emperor proposed. He appointed as his envoys John Xeros, the Bishop of Naupaktos, Constantine Melissenos, his brother-in-law, and one Lambetis; and a truce was arranged. The towns of Prilep and Veles, the one commanding the Monastir gap, the other guarding the Vardar valley, were to be handed back to the Kingdom of Nicaea, and the town of Kroia in Albania was to become a vassal state of the Emperor. Envoys bearing the document for signature were sent back to Michael. Among them was George Akropolites, the historian. Vatatzes did not intend to make the same mistake twice. He gave instructions that Theodore Angelos was to be taken captive, and this time he would not be allowed to return. When oaths had been exchanged the Nicene envoys returned to Vatatzes at

Vodena bringing with them Theodore as a prisoner and Michael's son Nikephoros as a hostage. Nikephoros was honoured with the title of Despot, by reason of his betrothal to the Emperor's granddaughter, and sent back to his father. But the aged Theodore, singled out as the prime cause of the 'rebellion' of the western Greeks against the sovereignty of Nicaea and the instigator of Michael's treachery, was removed from the scene of his former conquests and glories, and carried off to Nicaea. There he ended his tumultuous career as the prisoner of the Emperor whose title he refused to recognise.¹⁴

Vatatzes spent the rest of the winter in Vodena, and in the spring of 1253 made a tour of his outposts in Ochrida, Devol, and Kastoria, before setting out for home in the autumn. In the district of Vodena he left a garrison of troops under the command of his relative Alexios Raoul and Michael Palaiologos, to guard the approaches to Thessalonike; and he took special measures to secure the loyalty of the Albanians. Golem was rewarded for his surrender by the gift of a charter granting the privilege of complete freedom from imperial interference to the inhabitants of Kroia both within and without the town. Albania became almost a protectorate of the Kingdom of Nicaea, and Michael's possession of Durazzo and the northern Epirote coast was seriously threatened.¹⁵

The Emperor delayed at Philippi on his way home. A report reached him that a conspiracy was being organized by the ambitious Michael Palaiologos. A court of inquiry was held without delay. Among the several charges brought against Palaiologos was that of consorting with Michael of Epiros. It was said that he was arranging a secret alliance on the basis of his betrothal to one of the Despot's daughters, in return for which he was to hand over the western Macedonian provinces to the Despotate. The charges were unproved, however. Palaiologos was acquitted, and Vatatzes was able to continue his journey to Nicaea at the end of 1253 with his confidence restored.¹⁶

Michael's movements were now limited. The Despotate was strictly confined on its northern boundaries. Vatatzes had garrisoned all the towns between Ochrida and Thessalonike and extended his authority as far as the neighbourhood of Durazzo. For the moment Michael could have little hope of capturing

Thessalonike and still less of advancing towards Constantinople. But the zenith of his career was yet to come. The capture of Theodore left him as the last surviving champion of the cause of the western Greeks; and the sovereignty that Theodore had fought for and upheld was still his inspiration. John Vatatzes had frightened all his other enemies into temporary submission, but his word was still not law in Epiros; and the situation was soon to be changed by the revolt of his northern ally Bulgaria, on whose loyalty he relied for his control of Thrace. Corfu and the coast-line from Durazzo to Avlona remained in Michael's hands, and it did not take him long to win back the Albanians to his cause.

Of the administration of the Despotate at this time there is no record. Akropolites, the primary authority for the history of Michael's career, gives a careful account of the campaigns and engagements in which he himself was involved, but says nothing of the internal organization of the Despotate. The northern towns and fortresses that form the subject of Akropolites' narrative between the years 1246 and 1260 covered a relatively small area. They were interesting to the historian because the long conflict between Epiros and Nicaea was fought out around them, and because their mountains provided the battle-ground for the final and decisive struggle in that conflict. But the greater part of the Despotate, Epiros, Thessaly, Akarnania, and Aitolia remained undisturbed by the campaigns in Macedonia. It is not known to what extent Michael delegated the administration of his dominions; for there is no record, such as that provided by the correspondence of the Epirote bishops in Theodore's time, of the names and functions of his deputies and governors. He had five sons, Nikephoros, John, and Demetrios by his wife Theodora, and John Doukas (or Nothos) and Theodore, the illegitimate offspring of the wicked lady Gangrene. By 1250 only Nikephoros, who was born during Theodora's exile, and perhaps his two illegitimate sons, can have been of age to take much part in the administration or defence of their father's territory. By the terms of his will, Michael divided the Despotate between Nikephoros and John Doukas, placing his two youngest sons under their authority. But there is reason for believing that this arrangement, by which Nikephoros received Arta and Epiros, and John Doukas

Neopatras and Thessaly, was already partially in force long before Michael's death. John Doukas, at least, was well established in southern Thessaly during his father's lifetime, and ingratiated himself with the unruly Vlachs by marrying a daughter of Taronas, one of their chieftains.¹⁷

¹ Akropolites 70-1. Ephraim 8469-80. Demetrios seems to be the signatory of certain charters relating to the Monastery of Chilandari on Mount Athos. See A. V. Soloviev, in *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, X (*Mélanges A. A. Vasiliev*, Prague 1938), nos. 9, 39, 54, 56, 57, pp. 31-9.

² The recovery of Halmyros from the Latins by Michael II is mentioned in his chrysobull to Constantine Melissenos. See below, note 3. The campaign against Boudonitza is recorded only by Sanudo, ed. Hopf, *Chroniques Gréco-romanes*, p. 103, with no indication of the date. But it seems reasonable to connect it with Michael's campaign in Halmyros in 1246, and with the death of Geoffrey II in the same year. The Marquis of Boudonitza at the time was probably Hubert Pelavicino, the son of Guy. See W. Miller, *Essays on the Latin Orient*, p. 248.

³ Chrysobull in Miklosich and Müller, IV, pp. 345-9. (See P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (1953), no. 12, p. 412.) The interpretation of this document has led to some confusion. Constantine is said to have received the Monastery of Hilarion originally 'ώς ἀπὸ δωρεᾶς τοῦ κόντορος ἐκείνου γεγεννημένους πρὸς τὴν θείαν μου τὴν βασιλικόν'. The 'Count' is identified by Romanos, Meliarakes (p. 355), and others as Maio Orsini of Cephalonia, who had married an aunt of Michael II. But he had no connexions with Thessaly, and his wife was not a Basilissa. N. Giannopoulos ('Επετηρίς, I (1924), p. 211) identified him with William of Champliote, who was neither a Count nor related to the Angeloi. The only Count in the district was Berthold of Katzenellenbogen, Count of Velestino, who left Greece in 1217; and the only one of Michael's aunts who qualifies for the title of Basilissa is Maria Petraliphas, Queen of Thessalonike. Berthold may have married a Petraliphas while he was in Greece and presented the Monastery to Maria when he left. His relations with Eustace of Flanders, who was connected by marriage with the Angeloi, are to be remembered. The Monastery of Hilarion was in the diocese of Velestino, the Monastery at Makrinitsa in that of Demetrias (see Giannopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 213). The rights of the latter as a 'stavropegin' were disputed by the Bishops of Demetrias during Manuel's rule in Thessaly, but confirmed by the Patriarchs Germanos II and Manuel, and finally established by Arsenios (Miklosich and Müller, IV, pp. 353-7). Constantine was later deprived of the Monastery of Hilarion for taking the side of Nicaea, and was buried in the Makrinitsa Monastery when he died. His son Nicholas later married a niece of the Emperor Michael VIII (*ibid.*, pp. 333, 350, 384). Michael was also concerned in regulating the affairs of the Monastery of Marmariaria in the diocese of Larissa (see document of 1318 in Miklosich and Müller, I, pp. 85-8).

⁴ The two chrysobulls are published by Sathas, *Monumenta Historiae Hellenicae*, vol. I, pp. 48-9, and Romanos, *Δελτον*, II (1889), pp. 594-6. See also P. Lemerle, *Trois Actes du Despote d'Epiro Michel II concernant Corfu*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (1953), nos. 2 and 3, pp. 418-26; N. Barone, *Notizie storiche di Re Carlo III di Durazzo*, pp. 65-6. V. Lamansky, *Secrets d'état de Venise*, pp. 49-50, refers to the Sacred Band as 'papates

'... qui seducunt populos ad perseverantiam heresis', composed of exiled clergy from Constantinople and the Morea. It was in fact much older. See Phrantzes, ed. Bonn, 411-12, and Romanos, *op. cit.*, p. 591.

⁵ For the Mongols, see Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire*, pp. 530-2. S. Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, vol. III, pp. 251-4.

⁶ Gregoras, I, 45. Pachymeres, I, 181. Dölger, *Regesten*, nos. 1779-81a, p. 19. For Frederick II and Vatatzes, see A. Gardner, *The Lascaris of Nicaea*, pp. 159-79;

Vasiliev, *History*, pp. 528-30 and references; S. Borsari, Federico II e l'Oriente bizantino, *Rivista Storica Italiana*, 63 (1951), p. 283f.

⁷ Akropolites 72-9. Ephraim 8481-24. Jireček, *Bulgaren*, p. 264. See below, Appendix on the Topography of the Despotate, pp. 224-5.

⁸ Akropolites 79-84. Ephraim 8524-79. For the sea-gate (*Μικρὰ Πόλη*) of Thessalonike, see Tafel, *De Thessalonica eiusque agro Dissertatio*, pp. 106-7. Demetrios Angelos is not heard of again, and presumably died in prison.

⁹ Akropolites 84. Ephraim 8594-607. There is one chrysobull apparently signed by Michael as *πατρὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ρωμαίων*, which dates from 1247. See below, pp. 210-11.

¹⁰ Akropolites 88-9. Ephraim 8653-62. Gregoras, I, 48-9.

¹¹ N. Festa, Lettere greche di Federigo II, *Archivio Storico Italiano*, series 5, XIII (1894), no. 1, pp. 14-16. Huillard-Bréholles, *Historia Diplomatica Friderici Secundi*, vol. VI, p. 760. Miklosich and Müller, III, pp. 68-9.

¹² Akropolites 89-91. Ephraim 8663-96. Gregoras, I, 48. Glabas was probably Michael's military governor in Kastoria. For Theodore Petraliphis, see below, p. 216. For the dates of this campaign, see Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 1806, p. 23.

¹³ Akropolites 91. Ephraim 8697-704. Jireček, *Serben*, pp. 310-11. Golem (Gulamos) had married the daughter of Gregory Kamonas and acquired the succession to the principality of Kroia (see Drinov in *V.V.*, I (1894), p. 339. Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, I, p. 47; and below, Genealogical Table no. 3). Innocent IV had a sudden concern in 1250 about 'the heartfelt desire of the Bishop of Albanon to be joined to Rome', a desire that was soon forgotten. See his letter to the Archbishop of Antibari (20 April 1250) in Potthast, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, no. 14563; Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, I, p. 60, nos. 199, 200, and p. 66, no. 216.

¹⁴ Akropolites 91-2. Gregoras, I, 49. Xeros was Bishop of Naupaktos after Choniates, who succeeded Apokaukos (see document in Miklosich and Müller, III, pp. 61, 63). One Constantine Lambetis was the writer of a letter to Chomatenos about 1220 (Chomatenos 501).

¹⁵ Document referred to in a chrysobull of Andronikos II in 1288, published by Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, I, no. 234, p. 68 (where it is dated to 1253). The privileges to Kroia were confirmed by Theodore II Laskaris, who took the precaution appointing a governor of his own at Elbassan. See below, p. 160.

¹⁶ Pachymeres, I, 21, alone records the alleged dealings of Michael Palaiologos with Michael II. See Akropolites 92-101; Gregoras, I, 49. It is said, however, that Alexios Raoul, who shared the command with Palaiologos at Vodena, took as his second wife the third daughter of Michael. See Mustoxidi in *Hellenomnenon* (1843), p. 55; G. del Giudice, *La Famiglia di Re Manfredi*, p. 102.

¹⁷ Gregoras, I, 47. Pachymeres, I, 83; Gregoras elsewhere refers to Nikephoros as 'Αἰτωλός'. Sanudo, *ed.* Hopf, p. 107, in 1258 calls John Doukas (under the name of 'Teodoro') 'Signor de la Parte, d'Odrich, e finalmente della Blachia', i.e. lord of Patras (Neopatras), Loidoriki, and Thessaly. The father-in-law of John Doukas may perhaps be the same Taronas mentioned as Theodore's prisoner of war in a letter of John Apokaukos about 1222. Apokaukos, *ed.* Petrides, no. 33, pp. 31-2.

CHAPTER 9

MICHAEL II ANGELOS, DESPOT THEODORE II LASKARIS, EMPEROR

1254-58

THE Emperor John III Vatatzes died at Nymphaion on 30 October 1254. In the thirty-three years of his reign he had shown himself a capable general and a clever statesman. When he came to the throne the centre of gravity of the Byzantine world lay in Greece rather than in Asia Minor. When he died it had shifted decisively to Nicaea. The position of the Latin Empire from being precarious had become hopeless. The Turks had been pacified. Bulgaria had been robbed of much of its Empire. But in Greece it was never forgotten that John Vatatzes had risen to power on the ruins of the Empire of Thessalonike. It was the defeat of Theodore Angelos in 1230 that had left the way open for him to substantiate his claim to be the one true Emperor of Byzantium; and sixteen years later the opportunity had been given to him to blot out the traces of the less fortunate claimant to the same title by incorporating Thessalonike into the Kingdom of Nicaea. But Theodore Angelos had based his career of conquest on Epiros, and the Epirotes had for too long maintained their own independence ever to accept the rule of an Emperor in Nicaea. Their Emperor was Michael II Angelos, and he would defend their rights against the pretender in the east. Throughout his reign Vatatzes was faced with the problem of a rival to his authority; and it was this problem that prevented him from making the most of his other opportunities and exploiting the weakness of the Latin Empire. He bequeathed it unsolved to both of his successors. It is sad to reflect that for some twenty years the feeble Latin Emperor Baldwin II was allowed to hold the throne of Byzantium without either arms or resources, while the Byzantine Greeks of Epiros and Nicaea, whose combined armies could so easily have taken the city, spent their time and their energy in fighting each other.¹

The Kingdom of Nicaea passed to the son of John Vatatzes,

Theodore II Laskaris, who was crowned by a Patriarch of his own creation on Christmas Day 1254.² The first attempt to profit from the death of Vatatzes was made by Michael Asen of Bulgaria. Related as he was to the ruling families of Epiros, Serbia, and Nicaea, Michael Asen was able to change his allies to suit his own advantage. He was a grandson of Theodore Angelos, a brother-in-law of the new Emperor of Nicaea, and he had recently married the daughter of a Russian chieftain, Rostislav Michaelovič, who had been displaced from Kiev by the Mongol invasions and established himself as 'Ban' of part of northern Serbia. He had long been waiting for the opportunity to win back some of the Macedonian and Thracian territory that Vatatzes had seized from him; and in January 1255 he led an army over the Maritza, which had been fixed as his boundary, and soon overran the country as far as the Vardar valley and over to the mountains of Albania.³

In answer to this challenge Laskaris left the Kingdom of Nicaea in the hands of his Great Domestic, George Muzalon, and marched into Thrace. Once again the devastated mountains and villages of Thrace and Macedonia were fought over. The campaign lasted for over a year. The former Bulgarian governor of Serres, Dragotas, broke his allegiance to Nicaea, raised an army of his own, and laid siege to Melnik. But Laskaris scored a brilliant victory over him at the Rupel pass and beat back the armies of Michael Asen on all sides. From Thessalonike and his camp at Vodena he recaptured the district of Prilep, Veles, and Dibra; and he took the precaution of renewing the privileges that his father had granted to the town of Kroia in Albania. At the end of 1255, with the Bulgarian revolt virtually defeated, he returned to Nymphaion. In the following spring he crossed again to Thrace and completed his victory. Michael Asen was obliged to come to terms through the mediation of his father-in-law Rostislav; and in May 1256, on the river Ergene in eastern Thrace, he signed a treaty with the Emperor restoring all the territory that he had recently acquired.⁴

Michael of Epiros was meanwhile busily engaged in undoing the work of Vatatzes on the northern frontiers of the Despotate. The Bulgarian revolt against Nicaea and its initial success started a ferment of excitement elsewhere. Stephen Uroš of Serbia broke

off his alliance with Nicaea and made an agreement with Michael Angelos. The Albanians, with a little encouragement, would be ready enough to do the same; and Michael himself felt emboldened after his recent set-back. He began a campaign of intrigue in Albania, and planned a campaign of conquest against Nicaea. But the Bulgarians were defeated after all, and in the early summer of 1256 the victorious Emperor of Nicaea was in Thrace and might soon be in Macedonia. Laskaris was in fact all too strongly placed to carry on the conquests begun by his father and extend his rule as far as Durazzo and the Adriatic coast. Durazzo would be a valuable prize for the Kingdom of Nicaea. Its loss would be a further blow to the Despotate.⁵

It would obviously be imprudent to give the Emperor any pretext for war at this moment. It would be wiser to see him safely off the premises by offering some show of friendship. The time seemed favourable for completing the marriage alliance with Nicaea arranged seven years before. It may well have been the prudent Theodora who advised her husband in this matter, to save him from the consequences of his own ambitious schemes. It was certainly Theodora who put the idea into practice. In the summer of 1256 she set out with her son Nikephoros and dauntlessly made her way through many miles of enemy territory towards the Emperor's camp on the Bulgarian frontier. Laskaris, hearing that she was on the way, hurried to receive her; and on 14 September they met in the district of Lentza at the mouth of the Maritza river. There they celebrated the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, and after three days' rest travelled on together to Thessalonike.⁶

On their journey Laskaris shamelessly exploited Theodora's defenceless position by imposing certain totally irrelevant but highly important conditions on the marriage of her son. As a reward for so honourable an alliance the towns of Durazzo and Servia were to be yielded on oath to the Kingdom of Nicaea. Theodora was for once at a loss. Laskaris would hardly have dared to make such demands if Michael had been present, but Theodora was at his mercy. She had no option but to give her assent, in the full knowledge that Michael's indignation would quickly shatter the peace that she had been at such pains to establish.

Laskaris had not expected so easily to win possession of Michael's last stronghold in Albania. Deprived of Durazzo on the west and Servia on the east the Despotate might never rise again. The overland route from Thessalonike to the Adriatic would be open to the imperial armies; and a Nicene garrison in Thessaly would be a strong deterrent to the ambitions of John Doukas. The necessary documents were drawn up and sent to Michael for his signature. Durazzo and Servia were handed over to the Emperor; and the seeds were sown of renewed and embittered hostility between Epiros and Nicaea. The marriage of Nikephoros to Maria was finally solemnized in the presence of Theodora and the Emperor by the Patriarch Arsenios in October 1256, and the title of Despot was again conferred on Nikephoros.⁷

Michael had been driven to acquiesce in the loss of Durazzo and Servia from fear that his wife and son might be taken as hostages; and he contained his wrath until Theodora had been safely returned to him and Laskaris had withdrawn to Asia Minor. The Emperor's departure was speeded by events in the east. It was rumoured that Michael Palaiologos, whom he had entrusted with a command in Bithynia, had gone over to the Turks. To hold his Macedonian provinces in check Laskaris appointed a number of imperial governors. In Thessalonike he made his great-uncle Michael Laskaris commander-in-chief, with a small garrison of Paphlagonian troops and three hundred Cuman mercenaries. Elbassan, guarding the approaches to Durazzo, he gave to the command of one Constantine Chabaron, Prilep and district to Xyleas, and the country round Veles to Theodore Kalambakes. As Praetor, with civil and military command over the whole of the western provinces, he appointed George Akropolites, the historian. On 23 October 1256 Laskaris left for Bithynia.⁸

In December of the same year Akropolites set out from Thessalonike on a tour of the territory that had been committed to his care. In his history he gives an account of his itinerary which, though lacking in other detail, is of considerable topographical interest. He went first to Berroia, where he met the members of a delegation from Rome, headed by the Bishop of Orvieto, who were on their way to Nicaea at the request of Laskaris to discuss once again the union of Christendom.⁹ After a short stay

there he continued his journey south to confirm the authority of Nicaea over the town of Servia, and thence north again through Kastoria and Ochrida to Elbassan, where he was received by the new governor, Constantine Chabaron. The Archbishop of Ochrida, Constantine Kabasilas, was under suspicion of treachery, and Akropolites had orders from the Emperor to put him under arrest. The charge may have had some good foundation; for the Kabasilas family, who came from Durazzo, were influential in the service of the Despotate. The Archbishop's brothers, John and Theodore, were both prominent members of Michael's court circle, the former as minister of state and domestic affairs; and the fact that the Archbishop himself had been a close friend of the late Demetrios Chomatenos was perhaps sufficient to make him suspect at Nicaea.¹⁰

From Elbassan Akropolites went straight to Durazzo to accept the formal surrender of the city in the name of the Emperor. He sent a despatch to Nicaea urging the appointment of a Metropolitan bishop, and asking for a garrison force for the defence of Durazzo; and after eight days he began his journey back to Thessalonike, passing first through the district of Chounabia, in which lay Kroia, the capital of Golem. The control of Durazzo by Nicaea depended to a very large extent on the loyalty of the Albanians; and the trouble that Akropolites took to secure their allegiance, crossing and re-crossing the desolate mountains of their country in the depth of winter shows the importance that he attributed to their support. From Kroia he travelled north-east over the mountain-pass called Kake Petra into the valley of the Mat river, and thence east towards Dibra and Kičovo. At the end of February 1257, after a journey of some three months, he arrived at Prilep, the strong fortress to the north of the Monastir gap, which was under the command of Xyleas, and from there

made for Pelagonia and Thessalonike.¹¹

Albanian loyalties changed with the wind. When Akropolites arrived at Pelagonia news was waiting for him that a rebellion had already broken out in Elbassan, incited by the Despot Michael. Akropolites' journey through Albania had given Michael valuable information about the size and strength of the imperial army in Macedonia. His intrigues had already paved the way for a revolution against Nicaea; and the under-

hand method by which Laskaris had got hold of Durazzo must have annoyed the Albanians as much as it infuriated Michael. Golem and his people had now had the opportunity to assess the competence of the *Prætor* who had been appointed over them, and were quite ready to revert to their old alliance with the Despotate.

The Albanian rebellion was the first symptom of a full-scale campaign against Nicaea which Michael had been scheming since the death of John Vatatzes. The defeat of Michael Asen's attempted revolt had made him hesitate for a moment. But when Laskaris appropriated Durazzo and Servia war between Epiros and Nicaea was almost inevitable. Michael's intentions first became known with the news that the governor of Elbassan, Constantine Chabaron, had been taken prisoner. Chabaron was a good soldier but given to vanity. He was beguiled by the charms and ensnared by the love-letters of Maria Petraliphas, Theodora's sister. His capture and imprisonment, engineered by Maria, was the cue for a general uprising on the part of the Albanians, encouraged by Michael. His Serbian allies supported him.¹²

Akropolites at first hardly realized the full gravity of the situation. The loss of Elbassan seemed to him to be the main outcome of the revolt, and his most immediate concern was to restore his authority there by appointing another governor with an increased garrison. When the news reached him he at once communicated with Michael Laskaris at Thessalonike and Xyleas at Prilep, ordering them to meet him in Pelagonia to discuss a plan of action. It was decided that Laskaris and Xyleas should join forces in Pelagonia, where they would be strategically placed to drive a wedge between Epiros and Serbia, and so prevent the revolt from spreading. Akropolites himself took his small army to Ochrida, and sent one of his officers, Isaac Nestongos, in advance to Elbassan, armed with the credentials of a military governor, to restore order and reassert the imperial authority in Albania. But Akropolites soon found that the rebellion was more widespread than he had imagined. When he and his army arrived in the neighbourhood of Elbassan it was as much as they could do to rescue Nestongos and retreat hastily to Dibra. Not only Elbassan but all the towns of Albania were found to be in

open revolt against Nicaea and wholeheartedly in support of their old ally Michael of Epiros. Akropolites had to fight his way back to Ochrida, and, leaving Nestongos in command there, hurry on through Prespa and Pelagonia to the comparative safety of Prilep.¹³

Michael and his allies, having lured Akropolites into their trap, now took the offensive from the district of Elbassan. Michael led his army victoriously in the direction of Thessalonike. Kastoria and Berroia changed hands, and Michael Laskaris and the other Nicene generals barely held their ground. Michael himself marched north in pursuit of Akropolites, capturing the abandoned villages on his route, and laid siege to Prilep. He hoped that the operations of his agents inside the town would prove stronger than its defences. But the walls of Prilep were virtually impregnable, and Michael's fifth column failed to do its work. Akropolites was firmly entrenched, and Xyleas, who had covered his retreat, kept command of the outskirts of the town.

From his beleaguered position Akropolites sent an urgent request for reinforcements to Nicaea; and after some deliberation Michael Palaiologos, who had once again cleared himself of the charge of treason, was sent to the western provinces in the summer of 1257 under oath of loyalty. Theodore Laskaris was torn between his suspicions and his confidence in Palaiologos as a general; and the force that finally arrived to relieve Akropolites was too small to be effective. But Michael Palaiologos was in no position to demand a larger army, and he made his way to Thessalonike to join forces with Michael Laskaris on the other side of the Vardar valley. Even their combined numbers were not sufficient, however, either to cut their way through to Prilep or to attempt the siege of Berroia; and they were forced to content themselves with ravaging and looting the country to the west of Thessalonike.¹⁴

Meanwhile Michael's northern allies had answered his call, and a Serbian army a thousand strong descended without warning on Prilep from Kičovo. Stephen Uroš, seeing the sovereignty of Nicaea so effectively challenged, had sent out an expedition to win back some of his long-lost territories to the south of Skoplje. Akropolites was beset by enemies on all sides. When the Serbians appeared and began to devastate the fields

around Prilep, Xyleas, who was encamped near the town, demonstrated his inexperience as a general by allowing his men to break ranks and to rush at the enemy in disorder. The result was confusion and disaster. Xyleas made a futile effort to rally his scattered army, and suffered a defeat from which he himself only escaped by ignominious flight. Akropolites' position was now even more acute, and his only hope lay in the natural defences and strong fortifications of Prilep.

Michael was now fully aware that the reinforcements sent from Nicaea were quite inadequate. Palaiologos and Laskaris had advanced from Berroia and encamped in the neighbourhood of Vodena. Michael decided to open an offensive against them. He assembled a company of five hundred carefully picked cavalry and put them under the command of his son Theodore, with orders to proceed from Pelagonia in the direction of Vodena. On the way they were met by a ragged body of cavalry under one Manuel Lambardas, who had been rash enough to disassociate himself from the rest of the Nicene army and advance into unknown country in the hopes of easy plunder. Theodore's picked troops quickly dispersed this undisciplined body of raiders, and such of them as succeeded in escaping hurried back to their base camp to tell Palaiologos that he was about to be attacked.

With the boldness of a great general, Palaiologos instantly took command of the company of five hundred Paphlagonian troops that had been under the command of Michael Laskaris, and, sword in hand, went out to meet the advancing army. Battle was joined in the hills to the west of Vodena, and the discipline and spirit of the Paphlagonians, encouraged by the personal bravery of their general, won the day. The unfortunate Theodore, unhorsed by Palaiologos at the first charge, was put to the sword by a Turkish soldier before his rank was recognized. Some twenty of his men were taken captive, many were killed, and the rest took to flight. Palaiologos could spare no men to pursue them and complete his victory, but the road was at last open for him to reach Akropolites. He fought his way through to Prilep and stayed there for a few days. But with so small an army there was no hope of starting a counter-offensive or of leaving a detachment to replace the troops lost by Xyleas; and in full knowledge of the treachery of the inhabitants he was forced to leave Prilep

to its fate and withdraw to Vodena. Akropolites, faithful to his Emperor's orders, remained at his post.¹⁵

The defeat of his son's army at Vodena proved only a temporary set-back for Michael. Events had shown beyond doubt that the Nicene armies were lacking both in numbers and in co-ordination. The obstinate defence of Prilep was the main obstacle in the way of his success, and prevented him from opposing a combined front to his enemies at Vodena. No sooner had Palaiologos withdrawn, therefore, than Michael turned again to the attack on Prilep. Akropolites, who was in sole charge of its defences, describes the operations in some detail. Michael invested the town on all sides and erected siege-engines. His first attempt to rush the fortifications and scale the walls with his whole force of slingers and archers was beaten off by a shower of stones and arrows. Two further attacks were similarly unsuccessful; and it became clear that the work of the fifth column inside the town, on whose support Michael relied to a great extent, was hampered rather than helped by his attacks. After his third failure he withdrew, and allowed treachery to work where force had achieved nothing. Within a few days the town was his. A party of the garrison, tricked by the conspirators, marched out by night to collect provisions, and while they were away the gates were thrown open to Michael's army. Akropolites barricaded himself in the citadel for fear of being put to death by the conspirators. He succeeded in holding out for some hours; but at the first light of day he surrendered to Michael in person, on the understanding that he should be allowed free passage back to Thessalonike. Michael soon broke the oath that he had given. Akropolites and his company were made prisoners and taken by forced marches to Arta.¹⁶

The capture of Prilep was a major victory for Michael and destroyed what little confidence the Nicene armies retained in their own meagre resources. A number of their officers, much to the disgust of Akropolites, had already surrendered their fortresses and joined themselves to Michael's service. Amongst these are recorded the names of Xyleas, the former commander at Prilep, Manuel Ramatas, and Pulachas. After Michael's victory at Prilep, Isaac Nestongos and several others voluntarily surrendered at Ochrida, and Theodore Petraliphas returned to the service of

the Despotate. Michael was once again master of most of western Macedonia. The defence of the approaches to Thessalonike still rested in the strong hands of Michael Palaiologos; but the Emperor of Nicaea chose this moment to charge with treason the one capable general who remained faithful to his cause. Palaiologos was recalled to Nicaea and cast into prison once again.¹⁷

In the meantime, however, the gains of the Despotate in Macedonia had been minimized by losses in another quarter. While Michael concentrated his resources on the encirclement of Thessalonike, a new personality had appeared on the scene to exploit the relatively defenceless state of the western shores of the Despotate. The Despots of Epiros had tried hard, not without success, to cultivate the friendship of the German Emperor Frederick II, and Michael may perhaps be forgiven for not foreseeing a change of policy on the part of his successors. When Frederick died in 1250 he bequeathed his Kingdom to his son Conrad IV. His bastard son Manfred was granted the Principality of Taranto, and recognized as baillie of the Kingdom of Sicily by Conrad. On Conrad's death in 1254 the succession passed to his infant son Conradin, and Manfred assumed the regency until such time as he could appropriate the crown. Manfred of Sicily was heir to the ambitions of his ancestors and his Norman predecessors in the direction of Greece and Byzantium. He saw in the enfeebled condition of the Latin Empire under Baldwin II, and the implacable rivalry between the Greeks of Epiros and Nicaea, an opportunity to realize those ambitions. While the Greeks disputed their claims to sovereignty he could begin, as former rulers of Sicily had begun, by establishing a foothold on the Epirote coast.

In the latter part of 1257, while Michael was engaged in his campaign against the Nicene army in Macedonia, a Sicilian fleet seized the occasion to attack and appropriate a large part of the Albanian and northern Epirote coast-line and islands. The circumstances of this expedition are unknown, but by February 1258 Manfred was recognized as suzerain over the towns of Avlona and Durazzo, which only a year before had been claimed by Nicaea, the district of Sphenaritza at the mouth of the Voiussa river to the north of Avlona, and the important inland fortress of Berat.¹⁸ A prominent figure in this new colonial

enterprise was one Philip Chinardo, the friend and counsellor of the late Emperor Conrad, a Cypriot Frank, who had attached himself to Manfred's cause. In June 1258 Chinardo led a second large fleet over the Adriatic; and before long Manfred's control over the coast of Epiros extended south to the island of Corfu and the adjacent islands of Sybota, with Butrinto, Chimarra, and Kanina on the mainland.¹⁹

Manfred's unexpected encroachments on the western limits of the Despotate were a serious embarrassment to Michael Angelos at a time when his supremacy over Nicaea seemed so near to being established. The loss of Corfu, whose loyalty he had been at such pains to preserve some twelve years earlier, and of Durazzo, must have been particularly bitter and ominous. Clearly he could not fight Sicily and Nicaea at the same time. But the war against Nicaea seemed of greater importance. The diplomatic solution to his dilemma would be to enter into negotiations with Manfred, to encourage him to lend his support against Nicaea by recognizing his territorial claims in Epiros, and so to turn the situation to the advantage of the Despotate.

¹ Akropolites 104-5. Dölger, *Regesten*, p. 25. For a discussion of the career of Vatatzes, see A. Gardner, *Lascaris of Nicaea*, pp. 193-6.

² Nikephoros Blemmydes, *Curriculum Vitae*, ed. Heisenberg, I, 43. Akropolites 105-7. Blemmydes refused to accept the Patriarchate, and Laskaris hurried a not very distinguished monk called Arsenios to the top of the hierarchical ladder in the space of three days.

³ Jireček, *Bulgaren*, p. 266 and note. Gesler, *Geschichte von Ungarn*, vol. I, p. 391. For Rostislav ('Πάωος Οὐρος), see Jireček in *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, 21 (1896), pp. 622-44. Theodore II Laskaris had married Asen's half-sister Helen. See below, Genealogical Table no. II.

⁴ Akropolites 107-27. Ephraim 8960-9104. For the date of this treaty, see Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 1833. For the renewal of the charter to Kroia, see Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, I, p. 238; Dölger, *Regesten*, no. 1850.

⁵ Michael's alliance with Serbia is mentioned by Akropolites 142. See Jireček, *Serben*, I, p. 317.

⁶ The Emperor's camp was on the Regina river (now the Ergene), a tributary of the Maritza (Hebros). The Thracian valley of the Maritza was collectively known as Voleron. Lentza (mentioned only by Theodore Skutariotes ('Ανωνύμος Σύνοψις Χρονικής, ed. Sathas) p. 526) was at the southern end of this valley, in the region of Pherrai.

⁷ Akropolites 132-4. Gregoras, I, 57. Ephraim 9105-15. Muralt, *Essai de Chronographie byzantine*, I, p. 385, gives the date of the marriage as 21 September 1257, which seems rather too soon after Theodora's first meeting with the Emperor.

⁸ Akropolites 134-9.

⁹ The legates of Pope Alexander IV apparently travelled by the overland route from Durazzo. Michael must have allowed them a free passage, perhaps in the light

of his own negotiations with Laskaris. Akropolites, acting on instructions from Nicaea, turned them back. See Norden, *Papsttum und Byzanz*, p. 380.

¹⁰ The arrest of Kabasilas is presumed to date from this time although Akropolites does not mention it until two years later. See Akropolites 166, and below, p. 177. He was almost certainly the same Kabasilas who succeeded as Metropolitan of Durazzo, on the death of Dokcianos in 1223-4, and who was the correspondent of Chomatenos. He had formerly been Bishop of Tiberiopolis (Strumica). See Chomatenos, ed. Pitra, 617-86. L. Petit, in *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique russe à Constantinople*, VI (1900), p. 96. After Chomatenos there were two Bulgarian Archbishops of Ochrida, Joannitius and Sergius; and Kabasilas seems to have been transferred from Durazzo to Ochrida about 1246. See H. Gelzer, *Der Patriarchat von Achrida*, p. 12; Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, I, p. 51. A Demetrios Kabasilas is mentioned at Durazzo in January 1246 in a document published by P. Kerameus, *B.Z.*, XIV, pp. 569-70.

¹¹ The Patriarch appointed one Chalkoutzes as Metropolitan of Durazzo, but it is not clear if he ever reached there. See Pachymeres, I, 26 (who confuses the report sent from Durazzo with that later sent from Prilep); Le Quien, *Oriens Christianus*, vol. II, p. 245. Akropolites 139-40. For the topography, see Tafel, *De Via Egnatia, prolegomena*, p. xv; Meliarkes p. 459, note 2; and Appendix no. iii, below, p. 222f.

¹² Maria Petraliphas was the widow of Sphrantzes (? Francesco Orsini of Cephalonia). Akropolites 140. See Hopf, *Geschichte Griechenlands*, p. 281. P. J. Alexander, A Chrysobull of the Emperor Andronicus II in favour of the See of Kanina in Albania, *Byzantion*, 15 (1940-1), pp. 198-200.

¹³ Akropolites 140-3. Akropolites does not mention the fate of Durazzo, which less than a year later was annexed to the Kingdom of Manfred of Sicily (see below, n. 18). It can only tentatively be assumed that Michael recaptured it from Nicaea at this stage.

¹⁴ Akropolites 145. Pachymeres, I, 26.

¹⁵ Akropolites 145-9. Pachymeres, I, 26 (who calls Theodore Manuel).

¹⁶ Akropolites 149-50.

¹⁷ Akropolites 151. Pachymeres, I, 27.

¹⁸ See a deed of sale in Durazzo, dated 23 February 1258, 'in the time of Manfred . . . in the first year of his suzerainty over Durazzo, Belagrada (Berat), Avlona, the mountains of Sfenaritza, and the surrounding provinces'. Miklosich and Müller, III, pp. 239-42. Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, I, no. 245. Miss Gardner, *Lascaris of Nicaea*, p. 243, note 1, regarded the wording of this document as ambiguous, implying that Conrad II (Conradin) had been King for 'eight years', which would point to 1262. In fact the document reads: 'in the time of Manfred, in the eighth year of the Kingdom of Sicily since (the death of) his father Frederick II (1250), in the fourth year of King Conrad II . . .'-i.e. 1258, Conradin having succeeded in 1254.

¹⁹ Chinardo's expedition is recorded by Ughelli, *Italia Sacra*, vol. IV, p. 774 (17 June 1258), and B. Capasso, *Historia Diplomatica Regni Siciliae*, pp. 145-6. The authenticity of at least the latter part of this document (which makes the object of the expedition the translation of the bones of the Apostle Thomas from Edessa to Italy) has been denied by F. Schneider, Eine Quelle für Manfreds Orientpolitik, in *Quellen und Forschungen*, XXIV (Rome 1932-33), pp. 112-23. See also D. J. Geanakoplos, Greco-Latin relations on the eve of the Byzantine Restoration: the Battle of Pelagonia—1259, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 7 (1953), (pp. 99-141), pp. 107-8, and notes 29, 30, 33. The facts of the story may well have been confused with a pious fiction; and certainly the number of ships ('a hundred galleys') sounds improbable. But there seems no reason to doubt that Chinardo was active in the 'province of Macedonia' in June 1258. For the extent of Manfred's conquests in Epiros and Albania, see below, p. 183, note 5.

CHAPTER 10

MICHAEL II ANGELOS, DESPOT MICHAEL VIII PALAIOLOGOS, EMPEROR THE BATTLE OF PELAGONIA

1258-60

MICHAEL's victories in western Macedonia provoked a renewed outburst of bitterness on the part of his rival in Nicaea. The Emperor Theodore II Laskaris, suspicious of his own officers and with a superstitious fear of his enemies, ordered the Patriarch Arsenios to lay the whole of the Despotate of Epiros under the ban of excommunication from the Church, and a synodical decree was drawn up and published to this effect. The influential Nikephoros Blemmydes came out of his monastic retreat to denounce such foolishness, and the anathema was repealed. But the incident serves to show how the renewed strength of the Despotate frightened the Emperor of Nicaea. Had his suspicious nature allowed him to entrust Palaiologos with a more powerful army he might have lived to see the downfall of Michael Angelos, and spared himself the shame of issuing an interdict that he was quite unable to enforce.¹

The last diplomatic act of Theodore Laskaris was to conclude a treaty with Bulgaria, on whose continued friendship the line of communication between Thessalonike and Nicaea depended. In 1257 a conspiracy at Tirnovo had led to the assassination of Michael Asen. The throne was seized by his cousin, Kaliman. But the Russian Rostislav appeared on the scene to rescue his daughter, who had been compelled to marry her husband's murderer. Kaliman was deposed, and one Constantine Tichomir, a relation of the Serbian house, was placed on the Bulgarian throne, doubtless at the instigation of Rostislav. To secure his position Tichomir renounced his existing marriage and sought the hand of Eirene, daughter of Theodore Laskaris and niece of the late Michael Asen. To allay any doubts as to his sincerity he sent his former wife to the court of Nicaea; and in the spring of 1258 the ties between Bulgaria and Nicaea were confirmed by his marriage to Eirene.²

169

In August of the same year Theodore II Laskaris died, leaving his Kingdom to his infant son John, under the protection of the Patriarch Arsenios and the Protovestiaros George Muzalon, a man of some experience but with no military prestige and with powerful enemies among the aristocracy. The regency lasted a bare nine days. Muzalon was murdered at the altar during the funeral ceremony of the late Emperor. The historians of Nicaea have argued the extent to which Michael Palaiologos was directly concerned in this outrage, but it was to him that the people as well as the aristocracy turned in the hour of crisis that threatened Nicaea, and the influence of the army supported his rapid rise to power. He was invested first with the title of Grand Duke, and then, with the approval of the Patriarch, he took the rank of Despot and assumed the duties of regent for the young John Laskaris.³

The death of Theodore Laskaris and the uncertain state of affairs at Nicaea gave to Michael of Epiros new opportunities and encouragement. The recall of Palaiologos from Macedonia had left no standing force capable of holding back the Epirote army. Early in 1258 Michael had dislodged the Nicene garrison from Vodena and pressed his advance as far as the Vardar valley. Hopes of the recovery of Thessalonike and the capture of Constantinople revived in him the ambitions of his uncle Theodore. The defence of Thessalonike was still in the hands of the incompetent Michael Laskaris, and the position of the Latins in Constantinople had never been less secure. There was every excuse for the Despot of Epiros to 'talk big and have grandiose notions'; and like his uncle Theodore before him he added fuel to the fire of his ambition by meditating on the fact that Michael Angelos Komnenos Doukas was indeed worthier than any infant Laskarid or upstart Palaiologos to be the deliverer of Byzantium and the Emperor of the Romans.⁴

In these circumstances Michael conceived the plan of organizing a grand alliance for the capture of Thessalonike and the restoration of Byzantium. In the decisive struggle against Nicaea that he now began to foresee there were two rulers who might be persuaded to lend him their support, Manfred of Sicily and William of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia. The death of Theodore Laskaris coincided with the coronation of Manfred as

King of Sicily. In August 1258 Manfred used the pretext of a false report of the death of his nephew Conradi to seize the crown; and in the midst of his preoccupations in Italy appointed his admiral Philip Chinardo regent over his new dominions in Epiros. Michael wisely considered that it might be more politic, at least as a temporary measure, to come to terms with Manfred, rather than weaken his own resources by disputing Manfred's claim to those dominions. An alliance might be arranged to the advantage of both rulers. The eldest of Michael's daughters, Helena, was now fifteen years old. Manfred's wife, Beatrice of Savoy, had died in January 1258, and he would be anxious to find a new wife to share his throne. Michael therefore offered him Helena's hand in marriage; and for her dowry he very diplomatically proposed to grant the possession of a number of towns on the Epirote coast, thereby legitimizing Manfred's claim to what he had already acquired. Manfred had nothing to lose from such an alliance. It would save him the trouble of having to fight to maintain his foothold in Greece. Moreover he had personal reasons for supporting the Despotate against Nicaea. His half-sister Constance, who had married the Emperor John Vatatzes, had been rejected by him in favour of one of her ladies-in-waiting. The unhappy princess had been held as a prisoner at Nicaea by Theodore Laskaris, who refused all applications for her release; and she soon found herself obliged to resist the attempts of Palaiologos to make her his mistress, while the Patriarch intervened to prevent her becoming his wife. Manfred was no friend to the rulers of Nicaea. Lastly, the young Helena was said to be of rare beauty.⁵

Whether or not Michael could expect any active support from Sicily remained to be seen. But at least the alliance would solve a problem and promote an understanding, and it would leave him free to give his undivided attention to the war with Nicaea. The betrothal of Helena to Manfred was therefore arranged, and although the wedding did not take place until the following year, Michael was tactful enough not to argue about the terms of the dowry.⁶

The third party in the grand alliance was to be a ruler who might be relied upon to support the Despotate in a more practical way. William of Villehardouin was by far the most powerful

figure in the Latin Empire at this time. He was also a capable strategist, and the Despotate had need of a strategist. However much Michael might despise the title of the upstart Michael Palaiologos he had good cause to respect his military prowess. The strength of the Epirote army, which had barely been sufficient to match the skill of Palaiologos in Macedonia, might well prove insufficient against so competent a soldier with all the resources of the Kingdom of Nicaea at his command. If the victories that had been achieved were to be made permanent, and if Thessalonike were to be recovered from Nicaea, mere force of numbers was not enough. A general was required who could match his strategy against that of Palaiologos. Michael himself was not a trained soldier, and his sons were too young to have had much experience in battle. Theodore had been killed in his first engagement. Nikephoros acted merely as his father's lieutenant; while John Doukas could only be relied upon to satisfy the thirst for plunder of the Thessalian Vlachs whose cause he had espoused. But the Despotate could boast of no experienced general.

William of Villehardouin had already been in friendly negotiation with the Despotate. Between 1256 and 1258 he had been involved in a struggle with the Venetian lords of Euboea over his claim to a third part of that island, following the death of his Venetian wife in 1255. The Duke of Athens, Guy I de la Roche, sided with Venice, and Villehardouin had found himself opposed by a powerful league of his own barons. In this predicament he had applied to Michael for support, and an agreement between the two rulers had been made despite the protests of the Pope. Order was restored by Villehardouin's victory at Karydi near Megara in June 1258. There is no record that Michael gave any material assistance to the suppression of this revolt, but the ground had been prepared for a more binding contract between Epiros and the Morea.⁷

Michael's second daughter Anna was now of marriageable age and no less attractive than her sister. It was suggested that William of Villehardouin, who had been a widower for nearly three years, might care to strengthen his friendship with Epiros by taking her as his third wife. Villehardouin was not averse to joining his interests with the Despotate, apart from any hopes he may have entertained of extending his Principality into the

north of Greece. From Michael's point of view the acceptance of such an alliance would be providential. The Prince of Achaia was an experienced warrior who enjoyed fighting for its own sake, and his prowess as a general was beyond dispute.

Ambassadors were sent from Arta to Villehardouin's court. They argued persuasively and made handsome promises. A dowry of 60,000 hyperpera, as well as gifts of fine raiment and other presents was offered, together with possession of the castle of Lechonia and other lands in southern Thessaly, conveniently close to Villehardouin's disputed property in Euboea. Their offers were accepted. A treaty of alliance was drawn up, and the marriage of Michael's daughter Anna to the Prince of Achaia was duly arranged. It took place without delay at Patras in the summer of 1258. The bride was given away by her brother Nikephoros. Oaths of mutual assistance between the rulers of Epiros and the Morea rendered them 'as one man'; and the beautiful Anna, 'like a second Helen with her Menelaus', was escorted to Villehardouin's new castle at Mistra.⁸

The whole continent of Greece was now ranged against Nicaea. The prize of Constantinople, which had never seemed so easy of attainment, lay waiting for its deliverers to settle their own differences. The disorders following the death of Theodore Laskaris in August 1258 made it impossible for Nicaea to challenge Michael's position of supremacy. But as soon as Michael Palaiologos was established as regent for the boy Emperor John he took what measures he could for the defence of Thessalonike. At the end of September he sent an army into Macedonia under his own brother John Palaiologos, who had recently been made Great Domestic, accompanied by the experienced generals Alexios Strategopoulos and John Raoul. Their purpose was to add to the defences of Thessalonike, and their one attempt to advance further west was defeated near Berroia by Michael's son John Doukas, leading a company of his Vlachs. All that could be hoped was that they could hold the passage of the Vardar river against the Despot's army until the domestic affairs of Nicaea were in a stronger position.⁹

Michael was now more determined than ever to force a decisive battle. He saw that the moment was favourable. Nicaea was without an effective government, and given the support of his

new allies he could easily outnumber the defenders of Thessalonike. Towards the end of 1258 he sent letters and ambassadors to his son-in-law Villehardouin to arrange a conference, and soon crossed to the Morea himself by way of Naupaktos and Drepanon. Amid great rejoicings the two rulers met in Patras. A council of war was held, and a combined expedition of infantry and cavalry against the Nicene army in Macedonia was planned for the following spring. It is said that a new 'Partition Treaty' was made in anticipation of their success. Villehardouin and not Michael was to have the Kingdom of Thessalonike. Michael was to content himself with Thessaly. It is hard to believe that Michael ever made such an agreement or that he would have honoured it in the event of victory. But the bait was tempting enough to provoke the Franks to action, whether an agreement was made or not. Michael returned from Patras to spend the winter of 1258 in Arta, and sent envoys to Manfred to tell him of the plans being made. Villehardouin wintered in his capital at Andravida, and issued orders for levies of troops to be got ready by Guy de la Roche of Athens, the Marquis of Boudonitza, the Barons of Thebes and Salona, the Lords of Euboea and the islands, and his other vassals.¹⁰

Meanwhile, in Nicaea, Michael Palaiologos was gathering the reins of government into his hands. The army, who saw the coalition formed between Michael Angelos and William of Villehardouin as a direct threat to the control of Thessalonike, loudly advocated that there should be an Emperor on the throne with power and experience sufficient to meet the danger. Palaiologos had already attained the rank of Despot. John Laskaris, for whom he was still nominally regent, was only eight years old; and the coronation that Palaiologos' supporters demanded for him was little more than the confirmation of a position that he already held. The Patriarch remained loyal to the rights of the boy King. But the Senate, the army, and the majority of the clergy openly proclaimed Michael Palaiologos as their Emperor. Aresniōs therefore conceded, on the understanding that John Laskaris should receive his crown at the same time; and the double coronation of Michael VIII and John IV was performed at Nicaea on 25 December 1258. With his authority now beyond question the new Emperor quickly disposed of all opponents

and possible rivals, and safeguarded his crown by sending the young Laskaris into custody at Magnesia.¹¹

As soon as his position was established in Nicaea Michael Palaiologos turned his attention to the situation on his western frontiers. It was possible that the expense and hazards of a full campaign against the combined armies of Michael and his allies could be obviated by diplomacy. The Despot's claims could perhaps be satisfied by some minor territorial concessions. At the turn of the year an embassy was sent from Nicaea to Epiros led by Theodore Philes, to win Michael's friendship and to negotiate for the release of the two prisoners, George Akropolites and Constantine Chabaron, at the expense of some of the disputed territory in Macedonia. But Michael was not to be put off so easily. The ambassadors were refused audience and curtly dismissed, a slight on the dignity of Nicaea which provoked Philes to warn the Despot of his impending doom and to foretell a repentance that would come too late.¹²

Seeing that no understanding was to be reached with Epiros, Palaiologos turned to the subversion of Michael's allies and sent envoys to Manfred in Italy and to Villehardouin in the Morea. To Manfred the return of his sister Constance may have been held out as a bait. But Manfred's memory was long, and far from accepting any such terms he threw the Nicene ambassador into prison. The embassy to Villehardouin met with no greater success. The adherence of both of these rulers to the pledges that they had given to Michael says much for the prestige of the Despotate. But their calculated rudeness to Palaiologos was inspired not so much by motives of loyalty to Epiros as by the hope of territorial gain to be realized from joining in battle against him.¹³

Diplomacy had failed and it was clear that the coalition could only be broken by force. The army sent to Macedonia in the autumn of 1258 must be greatly reinforced. If Thessalonike fell, the way to Constantinople would be open. It was not a moment for half-measures; and Michael Palaiologos, whose own service in Macedonia had taught him the strength of his most dangerous rival, began to make preparations on a scale suitable to the occasion. The confidence of Michael II was soon to be pitted against the strategy of the generals of Nicaea in the final campaign that led to the temporary collapse of the Despotate, and gave to

the Kingdom of Nicaea the breathing-space in which to accomplish the purpose of its existence.

While envoys were sent to all the allies of Nicaea, the commander of the Nicene army in Thessalonike, John Palaiologos, was raised to the rank of *Sebastokrator*, and his co-general Alexios Strategopoulos to the rank of *Great Domestic*. The news of their promotion reached them while they were spending the winter in Macedonia, and with it came orders to expect the arrival of reinforcements with which to open an offensive against Epiros. The Emperor's appeal to his allies was promptly answered. The Serbians, whose policy seems to have been closely connected with the Bulgarians since the accession of Constantine Tichomir, followed the Bulgarian lead and rejected their alliance with Epiros. Both sent detachments of mounted archers, the Serbians six hundred in number. From Hungary came a picked regiment of cavalry fifteen hundred strong: while the Duke of Carinthia arrived in person at the head of three hundred German horsemen. The army was made up to the required strength by the addition of its more regular auxiliaries and mercenaries, including fifteen hundred Turks, two thousand light-armed Cuman bowmen on horseback, as well as innumerable Greek infantry and cavalry.¹⁴

Early in March 1259 the various contingents began to assemble in the plain of Voleron to the south of Adrianople; preparatory to joining forces with John Palaiologos in Thessalonike. Michael meanwhile was encamped, together with his family, in the district of Kastoria, awaiting the arrival of his allies from the Morea. The position of the Epirote camp soon became known to Palaiologos, and he decided to spring a surprise attack without waiting for the reinforcements to arrive. Marching over the hills from Vodena he reached Kastoria in the dead of night and caught his enemy unawares. Rumour circulated that the whole of the imperial army was upon them, and Michael's troops were thrown into confusion. They fled panic-stricken into the darkness without waiting for the break of day. Little attempt at organized resistance was made, and many were killed in hand-to-hand fighting or met their death on the mountain passes. Michael's brother-in-law Theodore Petraliphas, in his haste to escape capture by the army whose standard he had deserted, drove his horse over a cliff and was lost. Most of the Epirote army, however, managed to

reach safety in Albania, and retreated across the Pindos mountains to reassemble in the coastal plains of Avlona.

It was an unexpected victory for John Palaiologos, and he decided to press his advance into the now undefended country to the north of Kastoria. The recovery of the long-contested fortresses of Macedonia proved easier than he had anticipated. Through Pelagonia he marched unimpeded to Ochrida and laid siege to the town. The Archbishop, Constantine Kabasilas, who had been brought back from exile on the orders of the Emperor, showed his gratitude to his Nicene benefactors by communicating with the inhabitants, exhorting them to renounce their loyalty to the Despot of Epiros and open the gates of their citadel. With Ochrida secured, Palaiologos turned south by way of Prespa to Devol, and made elaborate preparations for investing the town. But the defenders quickly surrendered. Kastoria, Soskos, and Molyskos all submitted without resistance, and the Nicene army marched victoriously westward almost to the coast, capturing the fortresses of Berat and Kanina. By the early summer of 1259 a strong wedge had been driven between Michael and his Albanian allies. His victories of the previous year had been cancelled out, and the Despotate was once again confined behind the Pindos mountains.¹⁵

Commenting on this lightning campaign Akropolites, not without justification, remarks on the habitual feebleness of the western Greeks when pressed by determined adversaries, and their general aversion to the discomforts of war. But the Despot and his army had been taken by surprise, and their retreat to Avlona was perhaps less unpremeditated than it appeared to the Nicene historians. Berat and Avlona had both already been appropriated by Manfred of Sicily and formed part of the dowry of his bride-to-be, Helena. Michael had every reason to hasten the arrangements for the marriage and confirm his alliance with the Kingdom of Sicily in such a way that Manfred would feel himself under moral obligation to send reinforcements to Epiros. At Avlona negotiations could be made with Manfred's own representatives; and the capture by the Nicene army of Berat and Kanina would be an added incentive to him to take action. Arrangements were therefore made for the long-delayed marriage. In May 1259 a fleet of ships arrived from Italy to escort the

bride; and, accompanied by a retinue of knights and ladies both Italian and Greek, Helena was conveyed to the port of Trani where Manfred awaited her. Amid the acclamations of the people she was led to the castle where the marriage ceremony was sumptuously performed on 2 June. The occasion was marked by tournaments, illuminations, and public holidays, while the two citizens of Trani who had been responsible for the safe conduct of the bride were honoured with knighthood. The anonymous historian who records these events remarks on the gentle manners and noble bearing of the young Helena who, though still only sixteen years of age, combined generosity of heart and prudence of mind with an unusual delicacy of features, a description which accords with other accounts of the good looks of the Petraliphas family, and testifies to the gentle upbringing given her by her virtuous mother.¹⁶

Michael's alliance with Manfred was now firmly cemented. An immediate outcome of the happy event at Trani was the despatch of a contingent of four hundred chosen German cavalry from Italy to Epiros, perhaps to Michael's camp at Avlona.¹⁷ With this addition to his numbers, and in order to gratify and reward his new son-in-law, Michael then laid siege to the fortress of Berat. Berat had been part of Helena's dowry, and would in any case be invaluable as a base for the reconquest of western Macedonia. But the Nicene garrison was firmly lodged, and the high walls of the castle proved impregnable. 'The strength of an army and cavalry is no greater than a column of ants if God be not with them', as Gregoras piously remarks; and when news arrived that his Frankish allies were already on their way north, Michael abandoned his assault on Berat and made south for Ioannina and Arta.¹⁸

William of Villehardouin had meanwhile crossed from the Morea to Naupaktos with his own army. It was composed mainly of Franks but included a number of Moreote Greeks. Among the knights were Anseau of Toucy and the aged warrior Geoffrey of Bruyères, Baron of Karytaina. The armies of the lords of Thebes, Athens, Salona, Boudonitz, and Euboa had been given orders to march north to assemble in Thessaly, perhaps together with John Doukas and his Vlachs. At Arta Villehardouin joined forces with Michael, who had hurried south

with his troops; and the next day the combined armies crossed over the Pindos mountains, giving a wide berth to John Palaiologos, and reached Neopatras. Meanwhile Villehardouin's vassals had come north by way of Gravia and Sideroporta, the modern village of Eleutherochori, on the road from Athens to Lamia; and about the end of May or the beginning of June the whole Greek and Frankish expedition assembled on the plain of Thalassinos, on the borders of Thessaly between Neopatras and Lamia. It was decided not to make direct for Thessalonike but to attempt the defeat of the Nicene army in open battle. From Lamia Michael and Villehardouin marched north to Larissa and thence along the valley of the Sarandaporos river, crossing into Macedonia at Katakolon, some twenty miles north of the village of Elassona on the road to Servia. Some prisoners taken during an attack on the fortress of Servia were able to supply information about the movements of the Nicene army and the arrival of the reinforcements from Adrianople.¹⁹

John Palaiologos meanwhile had assembled his own army in the district of Ochrida or Pelagonia, together with his allies and auxiliaries who had arrived by way of Thessalonike. He had in all twenty-seven companies (*άλλαγια*), of which only one, the German cavalry under the Duke of Carinthia, was independent of his command. His principal generals were Alexios Strategopoulos and John Raoul; and Palaiologos himself was commander-in-chief of the Greek infantry, the Turkish and Cuman auxiliaries, and the allied detachments of Hungarians, Bulgarians, and Serbs.

The situation in the enemy's camp was vastly different. The Epirotes, the Franks, and the Germans were under no single command. Michael led his own army of Greeks, with his son Nikephoros as his lieutenant. His illegitimate son John Doukas led his own company of Thessalian Vlachs. The German cavalry and Villehardouin's Frankish host formed two further independent companies. Villehardouin had a total of twenty Dukes, Counts, Barons, and prelates, and a great number of knights and sergeants, in all eight thousand fully-armed and twelve thousand light-armed men. Michael had eight thousand fully-armed and eighteen thousand light-armed men.²⁰

Never had such an army been arrayed on the side of the

Despotate. The fate of the Kingdom of Nicaea and of the Byzantine throne itself seemed to hang in the balance. But Michael and Villehardouin had no co-ordinated plan of strategy and no single purpose save that of victory by sheer weight of numbers. Their alliance was unreal and unnatural, and their relationships were bedevilled by the spirit of mistrust and misunderstanding that existed between Greeks and Latins. The army of Nicaea, on the other hand, was unified under a single leader and led by capable generals whose loyalty to the purpose of their Emperor was beyond dispute. The outcome was to prove that a Greek army supplemented by mercenaries and faithful allies was a more effective weapon than a heterogeneous collection of armies under separate commanders, each inspired by motives of personal advancement.²¹

About the end of June 1259 John Palaiologos led his army south from Ochrida, while Michael and his allies marched north from Kastoria. The attack was opened by Palaiologos in the hills between Pelagonia and Kastoria.²² The descriptions of the encounter are given by the Greek and western historians with great diversities of detail; and according to Akropolites who, though at the time a prisoner in Arta, is perhaps the most trustworthy authority, there was no real battle at all. John Palaiologos, acting on the advice of his brother Michael, who knew the ways of the enemy, deployed his forces in the manner best suited to their different abilities, posting his heavy-armed troops in strong, defensible positions in the surrounding hills, and keeping his light-armed Greek and Turkish cavalry in the plain. The most manoeuvrable of all his men, the two thousand Cuman mounted bowmen, he sent forward to reconnoitre and harass the enemy. At the same time he employed various devices to create a false illusion of the size of his army, to spread panic among the soldiers, and to increase the misunderstandings between their officers. The local peasants were made to light bonfires in the neighbouring hills and fields 'so that at night the mountain-sides and plains seemed to be burning up with all the fires upon them'. By day they stirred up a smoke-screen of dust by sweeping the plain with branches tied to the tails of their cattle; and in the evening the peasants and soldiers were all told to shout with one voice to impress the enemy with their over-

whelming numbers. Spies were also sent to spread rumours of the invincible superiority of the imperial armies and to persuade the Franks to return to the safety of their own land.

To establish themselves in a less vulnerable situation Michael and Villehardouin determined to try and break through in the hopes of reaching Prilep in the north. But their withdrawal by way of Soskos and Molyskos was seriously impeded by the harassing attacks of the Cumans who gave the Epirote and Frankish troops no rest by day or night, raiding them as they watered their horses and plundering their baggage-train. Their position was serious; and a hastily-formed plan of retreat agreed upon by the two commanders was thwarted only by the passionate rebukes of the indomitable Geoffrey of Bruyères, to whom the thought of retreating without inflicting bloodshed on the enemy was unbearable.

In the end when tempers were frayed and opinions divided the mutual hatred of the Greeks and the Latins flared up even in the higher command, and the whole structure of the alliance began to collapse. John Doukas, jealous of the honour of his Thessalian wife, whose beauty had excited not only admiration but also covetous glances, came to blows with some of the Frankish knights; and matters were made worse by the taunts that Villehardouin hurled at him concerning his parentage. To revenge himself for such indignities John Doukas deserted the camp and offered his services to the Nicene commander, on the condition that he might be allowed to vent his spleen on the Franks alone, and not be obliged to take arms against his father and brother.

Michael and Nikephoros, perhaps yielding to the persuasions of John, perhaps adhering to the plan of retreat formerly made with Villehardouin, thereupon elected to leave the Franks to their own resources, and withdrew by night following tracks known only to themselves. On the morning of the next day, a Sunday, Villehardouin found himself deserted by the allies whose call he had answered. Only Manfred's German cavalry remained. A council of war was hurriedly held, at which, thanks again to the warlike spirit of Geoffrey of Bruyères, it was decided to demonstrate to the Judas who had so basely betrayed them the worth and valour of the Frankish army, and to place their hopes of victory in their solidarity as members of one race.

News of Michael's withdrawal had meanwhile reached the Nicene camp, and John Palaiologos had brought up his army and prepared for battle. The Frankish knights and German cavalry advanced to meet them. The three hundred Germans under the Duke of Carinthia led the charge on the Nicene side, and as they came on Villehardouin ordered his knights to single them out for destruction. The Duke himself fell to Geoffrey of Bruyères in single combat, and his men were cut down beneath the Frankish swords 'like meadow grass before the scythe'. Palaiologos then signalled to his swift Cuman and Hungarian bowmen to shoot at the horses of the Frankish knights, who were inextricably mixed up with the Germans in hand-to-hand conflict, and to spare no thought for German lives. Once again the Cumans excelled themselves, and the knights fell thick and fast before the deadly accuracy of their arrows. The aged Geoffrey of Bruyères, though unhorsed, continued to fight on foot, and Palaiologos, impressed by his courage, rode through the fray to rescue him from death and took him into honourable captivity. Villehardouin while charging to his aid had his horse shot from under him and took to flight. The flower of the Frankish chivalry followed their leader, and the battle turned into a rout.

With the Nicene army in hot pursuit the Franks made for the south. But only the rank and file succeeded in getting away. Villehardouin was found near Kastoria hiding beneath a heap of straw, his concealment betrayed and his identity recognized by his prominent front teeth. He was led to the tent of John Palaiologos, where his knowledge of Greek enabled him to answer the charges levelled against him by his conqueror. Such of the lower ranks as managed to escape robbery and death at the hands of the predatory Vlachs in Thessaly made their way back to the Morea. Anseau of Toucy and his company were rounded up near Platamona on the coast, and he, together with William of Villehardouin, Geoffrey of Bruyères, and some thirty other Frankish knights were sent under escort to Michael Palaiologos at Lampsakos. Manfred's four hundred German knights, strangers in a strange land, surrendered without resistance to Alexios Strategopoulos and three other Nicene generals, and became prisoners of the Emperor.²³

¹ Nikephoros Blemmydes, *ed.* Heisenberg, p. 45. A. Gardner, *Lascaris of Nicaea*, pp. 209-10.

² Akropolites 152-3. Gregoras, I, 60-1. Jireček, *Serben*, I, pp. 316-17; *Bulgaren*, pp. 269-70. Constantine Tichomir (or Tichoslav, son of Toichos) was a grandson of Stephen II Nemanja, whose father had, like Demetrios of Elbassan, been given a Principality (possibly Skoplje) with the hand of one of Nemanja's daughters. Gregoras makes him the usurper of one Mytzes. It has been suggested that this is a confusion with Michael Asen, Miča being the diminutive form of Michael. But see Zlatarski, *Istorija*, pp. 473-5. One John Tichomir was archon of Skoplje about 1200 (see Chomatenos 263).

³ Akropolites 153-9. Gregoras, I, 57. Pachymeres, I, 80.

⁴ Akropolites 164 (μεγάλα ἐφόνει καὶ ὑπέρογκα διελέγητο). Pachymeres, I, 82, lines 16-20.

⁵ See especially D. Forges-Davanzati, *Dissertazione sulla seconda Moglie del Re Manfredi e sul loro figliuolo*, Naples (1791). G. del Giudice, *La Famiglia di Re Manfredi*, in *Archivio storico per le province napoletane*, III (1878), fasc. I, pp. 3-30, IV (1879), pp. 35ff., and 291ff., V (1880), pp. 21f., and 470f. M. Dendias, *Ἐλένη Ἀγγελίνα Δούκανη, βασιλισσα Σικελίας καὶ Νεαπόλεως . . . , Ἡ πειρωτικὰ Χρονικά*, I (1926), pp. 219-94. The extent of Helena's dowry has been much disputed. Sanudo, *ed.* Hopf, p. 107, gives it as Durazzo, Avlona, and Corfu. Davanzati, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-41, says 'Avlona, Butrinto, and the Sybota islands'. Del Giudice, *op. cit.*, III, p. 19 and IV, pp. 92-3, says 'Corfu, and all the adjacent coastline of Epiros, including Avlona, Kanina, Chimarra, Sybota, Butrinto'.

⁶ Meliarakes (p. 519) and others have supposed that no alliance between Michael and Manfred was arranged until the time of the wedding of Manfred to Helena in June 1259. But Akropolites (157, lines 21-3) shows that the marriage had already been arranged before Palaiologos became Emperor, i.e. before December 1258. A Venetian document of 1 September 1258 couples the name of Manfred with that of Michael (see Buchon, *Recherches historiques*, vol. I, pp. 104-5). Thalloczy, Jireček, Sufflay, I, no. 245, p. 71, suggested that the betrothal was arranged and the dowry settled very soon after the death of Manfred's first wife in January 1258. Geanakoplos, *op. cit.*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 7 (1953), p. 105 and note 18, dismissed this theory on the grounds that Michael would be unlikely, of his own free will (i.e. as dowry), to relinquish 'the most important part of his lands' to the 'ruler of a realm traditionally inimical to Epirus'.

⁷ Chronicle of the Morea 3177-269. Sanudo 104-6. Villehardouin's alliance with Michael is mentioned by Dandolo (*R.I.S.* XII), 363-4, who confuses the Despot with Michael Palaiologos. See Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, p. 221. The Battle of Karydi followed the Parliament held at Nikli on 20 May 1258 (Chronicle of the Morea 321).

⁸ Chronicle of the Morea 3111-37. *Libro de los Fechos*, *ed.* Morel-Fatio, 235. Sanudo 106-7 (who alone mentions Liconia). Akropolites 157-8. Gregoras, I, 71. Pachymeres, I, 82. Dorotheos of Monemvasia (*ed.* Buchon, *Chroniques étrangères*), p. xxxv. Anna changed her name to Agnes on marriage and bore two daughters to William, Isabel and Margaret (see Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, p. 223). It has been suggested that the comparison with Menelaus and Helen (made by Dorotheos) may have inspired Goethe's conception of Helen as the wife of a Frankish Prince in mediaeval Sparta. See J. Schmitt in his introduction to his edition of the Chronicle of the Morea, pp. lviii-lxvi, and G. Moravcsik, *Zur Quellenfrage der Helenaepisode in Goethes Faust*, *Byz.-neogr. Jahrbuch*, VIII (1935), pp. 41-56.

⁹ Akropolites 160. Gregoras, I, 72. See D. M. Nicol, *The Date of the Battle of Pelagonia*, *B.Z.* 49 (1956), (pp. 68-71), p. 68. This expedition was sent from Nicaea 'shortly after Michael Palaiologos had assumed the title of Despot' (ἀρτὶ τὸ δεσποτικὸν περιεζωσμένος ἀξίωμα, Gregoras, *loc. cit.*) and 'before his coronation' (πρὸ τοῦ βασιλικῶς στέφθηαι, Akropolites, *loc. cit.*, line 16f.); it crossed the Hellespont μικρὸν μετὰ τρόπος θερνάς and arrived in Macedonia in the late autumn (Gregoras, *loc. cit.*).

¹⁰ Akropolites 160. Gregoras, I, 72. Pachymeres, I, 83. Chronicle of the Morea 3480-520, 3633-4. *Livre de la Conqueste* 255-62. *Libro de los Fechos* 250-3. The Chronicles confuse John Palaiologos with John Doukas, Michael's son, and give a

wholly fictitious account of a campaign against him in Thessaly by Michael and Villehardouin (Chronicle of the Morea, *loc. cit.*, and 363-71. *Livre de la Conqueste* 275-6). Pachymeres, *loc. cit.*, makes it clear that John Doukas was on his father's side. The Aragonese Chronicle (Libro de los Fechos 253) also mentions Maio Orsini as one of the 'Barons' whom Villehardouin summoned.

¹¹ Akropolites 158-9. Pachymeres, I, 79-80. Dölger, *Regesten*, p. 30.

¹² Philes, governor of Thessalonike after Andronikos Palaiologos in 1247, was blinded by Theodore Laskaris (Akropolites 155). Akropolites, who gives the details of this embassy, compares the humanity of Palaiologos, who readily released the twenty prisoners he had taken near Vodena, with the cruelty of Michael, who would listen to no entreaties. Constantine Chabaron was the personal friend of Palaiologos. Akropolites was related to him by marriage, and describes the embassy as being largely inspired by the supplications of his wife.

¹³ Akropolites 165. For the fate of Constance, see Del Giudice, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-30; G. Schlumberger, *Le Tornbeau d'une Impératrice Byzantine*, in *Byzance et Croisades*, pp. 72-5. Palaiologos may also have sent an embassy to Pope Alexander IV. See Norden, *Papsttum und Byzanz*, pp. 382-3; Geanakoplos, *op. cit.*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 7 (1953), pp. 118-20.

¹⁴ Akropolites 161. Chronicle of the Morea 3586-607. *Livre de la Conqueste* 268-70. Libro de los Fechos 244. Cronaca di Morea, ed. Hopf, *Chronique gréco-romaine*, 441. See D. M. Nicol, *op. cit.*, *B.Z.*, 49 (1956), pp. 68-70. The numbers of the auxiliaries vary considerably: a thousand Serbians (Aragonese Chronicle), five thousand (Italian); four thousand Alans and Cumans (Aragonese), one thousand Cumans (Italian). See Geanakoplos, *op. cit.*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 7 (1953), pp. 124-5 and notes 116, 117. Akropolites (169, line 3), doubtless to magnify the victory of the Nicene army, mentions only 'Scythians and Turks' in the most general terms. The 'Duke of Carinthia' is a shadowy figure. Buchon, *Recherches historiques*, I, p. 135 note 3, and Schmitt (in the Index to his edition of the Chronicle of the Morea) identify him with Ulrich III of Carinthia. But Ulrich was still alive in 1269 (see *Monumenta Historiae Ducatus Carinthiae*, vol. II (Klagenfurt 1906), pp. 722-3). Perhaps he sent a contingent under one of his lieutenants, whose prowess on the field made him a legendary figure and caused his name to be confused with that of the heroic Baron of Karytaina, Geoffrey of Bruyères. The Aragonese Chronicle refers to them both by the same name, 'Quarantana'.

¹⁵ Akropolites 165-7 (*καὶ ταῦτα μὲν ὑπῆρχεν ἔπος ἐνισταμένου*). Gregoras, I, 72. Pachymeres, I, 83, 106. See D. M. Nicol, *op. cit.*, *B.Z.*, 49 (1956), p. 69. The Pindos mountains are called the 'Pyrreneans' by Akropolites. See K. Amantos in *Eπετηρίς*, I (1924), p. 48. Devol lay in the region of Lake Malik, to the south of Ochrida. Molyskos was a suffragan bishopric of Ochrida (see Gelzer, *Der Patriarchat von Achrida*, p. 20).

¹⁶ Anonymus Tranensis, published by D. Forges-Davanzati, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-13. See Del Giudice, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-21, 53-6. Trani lies on the Italian coast opposite Durazzo. Its castle is described as the strongest in Manfred's Kingdom.

¹⁷ Manfred's German contingent forms the subject of an article by M. Dendias, *Le Roi Manfred et la Bataille de Pélagonie*, *Mélanges Charles Diehl*, vol. I, (Paris 1930), pp. 55-60. He suggests that the conflicting accounts of its size (given by Akropolites as four hundred, by Pachymeres as three thousand) can be reconciled by supposing that there were four hundred knights in charge of a body of Saracen archers.

¹⁸ Gregoras, I, 73. The account of Michael's siege of Berat (given only by Gregoras) has generally been discounted; but see D. M. Nicol, *op. cit.*, *B.Z.*, 49 (1956), p. 70.

¹⁹ Chronicle of the Morea 3618-37, 3672-95. *Livre de la Conqueste* 272-4, 277-8. For the position of Sideroporta, see Kalonaros' edition of the Chronicle of the Morea (Athens 1940), p. 156 note. Katakolon was perhaps by the modern khan of Sarandaporos, on the boundary between Thessaly and Macedonia.

²⁰ Chronicle of the Morea 3696-711. Libro de los Fechos 256.

²¹ Gregoras, I, 74, lines 4-7, aptly comments on the racial and temperamental differences between the Greeks and Franks.

²² The site of the battle is unknown. Akropolites says that the Nicene attack was launched 'ἐκ τοῦ τόπου ὦν Βούλα λόγγος τούνοια', which is generally agreed to be in the district of Kastoria; but the Chronicles consistently refer to Pelagonia. See Geanakoplos, *op. cit.*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 7 (1953), Appendix A. The date is also uncertain, but the end of June or early July seems most likely. See D. M. Nicol, *op. cit.*, *B.Z.*, 49 (1956), pp. 68-71.

²³ Akropolites 167-71. Gregoras, I, 73-5. Pachymeres, I, 84-8. Phrantzes 17. Chronicle of the Morea 3696-4091. *Livre de la Conqueste* 279-305. Libro de los Fechos 262-84. Cronaca di Morea 442-7. Sanudo 107. An attempt has been made to combine the various accounts of the Battle. The story of the desertion of Michael and of John Doukas is that given by Pachymeres. Akropolites (171) says that the flight of Michael and Nikephoros in the night was the cause of the desertion of John Doukas and of the flight of Villehardouin. So also Ephraim 9400-9. Gregoras takes his account no further than Michael's siege of Berat and does not mention Pelagonia at all. But his version of the espionage activities of Palaiologos corresponds fairly well with the account given in the Chronicles of the Morea. His statement that Manfred was present at the Battle and only with difficulty succeeded in escaping is unfounded (see Dendias, *op. cit.*, *Mélanges Diehl*, I, pp. 57-60, and Meliarakes, p. 533, note 3). But there is no reason to suppose, with Dendias, that Akropolites' account of the capture of the whole of Manfred's contingent by four Nicene generals is fanciful. The remainder of the above account, especially the heroism of Geoffrey of Bruyères and the stand made by the Frankish army, derives from the Chronicles of the Morea. Geanakoplos, *op. cit.*, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 7 (1953), p. 127f., gives a survey of the various versions of the Battle, and discusses the possible motives behind Michael's desertion of his allies. His chief motive was most probably a psychological one, arising out of the temperamental and ideological differences between himself and the Franks.

CHAPTER 11

THE RESTORATION OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE
CONCLUSION

THE details of the engagement at Pelagonia are obscure and the accounts of the historians are confused, but the issue was clear; and whether it be classed as a battle or merely as a rout the victory for Nicaea was overwhelming. In the space of twenty-four hours the Despotate of Epiros had ceased to be a serious danger, and the most powerful prince of the Latin Empire had been taken captive. It is perhaps not possible to share the sentiment of Akropolites that 'the sun has witnessed few such victories as this'; but Pelagonia may at least justly be regarded as the prelude to the recovery of Constantinople by the Greeks. The only possible rival for the prize and the only competent defender of the city seemed to have fallen at one blow, and the way was at last clear for the restoration of the Byzantine Empire.

The Macedonian fortresses, whose mountainous landscape had provided the testing-ground for the armies of Epiros and Nicaea, and whose disputed possession had cost so much blood, never again acknowledged the authority of the Despotate; and the inhospitable stretch of country from Vodena and Ostrovon to Durazzo, including the towns of Prilep, Ochrida, Prespa, Kastoria, and Berat was annexed to the Kingdom of Nicaea.¹

Michael and Nikephoros Angelos, however, were still at large; and John Palaiologos made preparations to pursue his victory into the heart of their dominions to eliminate the chances of their recovery. He divided his army into two companies. He himself, together with John Doukas, marched into Thessaly by way of Trikkala, while Alexios Strategopoulos and John Raoul crossed over the Pindos mountains into Epiros. Strategopoulos left a detachment to lay siege to the citadel of Ioannina and made south for Arta. The capital of the Despotate was occupied by his troops without serious resistance. Akropolites, who had been

a prisoner there for almost two years, was at last released and escorted to Neopatras, where John Palaiologos had pitched his camp, before returning to Asia Minor.

After betraying his allies at Pelagonia Michael had beaten a hasty retreat to Arta, and from there, on the approach of Strategopoulos, had withdrawn to the comparative safety of Vonitza across the Ambracian Gulf. When Arta fell the fortress of Vonitza was practically all that remained of the Despotate, and Michael and Theodora with their son Nikephoros sought shelter in the Ionian islands. They sailed first to Leukas and then to the court of Michael's uncle Maio Orsini in Cephalonia.²

By the autumn of 1259 the 'rebel state' in the western provinces of the Empire seemed at last to have been brought to heel. The Despots of Epiros were in exile and their dominions were overrun by the armies of Nicaea. But the collapse of the Despotate was only superficial. The Epirotes soon rallied when the first shock of invasion had worn off, and they began to fight back with all the fanaticism of a people subjected to occupation by a foreign army. The siege of Ioannina continued without success, and the citizens of Arta showed an unrelenting antagonism towards their conquerors. Under the rule of the Despots they had so far been spared the humiliation of conquest; and they were not likely to forget their loyalty to Michael Angelos. But Michael himself had lost heart. From his island refuge he could see little hope of fighting his way back to his capital.

When all seemed lost a message came to say that his son John had arrived at Vonitza with an army of Vlachs. John Doukas had never intended to injure his father's cause at Pelagonia and he now repented of his fit of temper on the battlefield. After the battle he had accompanied John Palaiologos into Thessaly and as far as his own castle at Neopatras. But while Palaiologos went on to attack Levadia and Thebes he slipped away, deserting the Nicene army as suddenly as he had joined it. The news of his arrival at Vonitza greatly encouraged Michael. Perhaps after all there was some hope of restoring the fallen fortunes of the Despotate. Michael promptly left Cephalonia for the mainland, and father and son marched together on Arta. The inhabitants showed their welcome by harassing the imperial garrison, and before long the capital of the Despotate had been won back. An

Epirote army enthusiastically rallied to his standard, and Michael advanced victoriously to the north to relieve the siege of Ioannina. The enemy were quickly dispersed; and Alexios Strategopoulos and his troops were driven out of Epiros and retreated into Thessaly. The victory of Pelagonia had been considerably diminished almost before the news of it had reached Nicaea.

The main cause of Michael's recovery was the loyal support and enthusiasm of the Epirotes. But a contributory cause, as Akropolites ruefully points out, was the incompetence and perhaps the treachery of the Nicene generals. John Palaiologos and his officers were all too ready to hurry back to the east to be rewarded with the honours that were their due, before they had fully consolidated their position in Greece. Michael Palaiologos, who was at Lampsakos, received them as heroes and gave them their triumphs in happy ignorance of the plight of Strategopoulos, who had been left in command in Epiros and Thessaly. John Palaiologos was raised from the rank of *Sebastokrator* to that of *Despot*, because he had acquitted himself in battle against the Despots Michael and Nikephoros. The other generals were rewarded according to their merits, and Strategopoulos was informed by letter of his elevation from *Great Domestic* to *Caesar*.³

Michael was now again full of great schemes of conquest. If the imperial armies could be so easily driven out of Epiros it might be possible to recover the country north of Ioannina and as far as Durazzo. He decided to ask for the support of his ally across the water. Maio Orsini, with whom he had taken refuge in Cephalonia, was still a vassal of the Kingdom of Sicily, and Manfred had no doubt been informed of the situation. Early in December Michael sent Nikephoros over to Italy to report on the new developments and to negotiate for further reinforcements. The total loss of his four hundred cavalry at Pelagonia might have discouraged Manfred; but the loss of Berat and Durazzo and of the whole of the coastal district of Epiros which he had so recently acquired was more serious. The support that he gave to the Despotate was by no means disinterested, nor was it as practical as he could have wished, owing to his own pre-occupations in Italy. But the conquest by the Kingdom of Nicaea of what he considered to be his own territory provoked him to action; and he decided to send what troops he could spare to the help of his

father-in-law in Epiros. Nikephoros returned to Arta early in 1260 at the head of a company of Italian soldiers.⁴

The victory at Pelagonia had set the stage for Michael Palaiologos to make the final and decisive assault on Constantinople. But the moment might still be lost. News of the partial recovery of the Despotate must have reached the Emperor by the beginning of 1260. The Despots of Epiros, whose activities had for so long tied the hands of the Emperors at Nicaea, were only temporarily silenced; and there was no knowing what help the miserable Baldwin might yet elicit from his sympathizers in the west. Palaiologos could not at the time raise an army large enough to lay siege to the city. But he had among his prisoners from Pelagonia Anseau of Toucy, a distant relation by marriage, who said that he was prepared to get in touch with his family, who would then open a gate in the walls and allow the imperial troops to enter Constantinople. The plan sounded quite feasible; and in the spring of 1260 Palaiologos marched from Lampsakos, crossed the Hellespont and advanced up the Thracian side of the Sea of Marmora by way of Selymbria. The expedition ended in a futile attack on Galata, for Anseau of Toucy failed to fulfil his promises. The Latin Empire was to live for a few months longer. As Palaiologos was withdrawing from the city in September the Latin Emperor seized the occasion to ask him to sign a truce for one year.⁵

The opportunity had been missed, and reports from Greece were causing increasing concern at Nicaea. Michael and his son John had reclaimed most of Epiros, and the remaining company of the Nicene army had withdrawn into Thessaly. While Michael struck north from Ioannina, Nikephoros, who had arrived back from Italy early in 1260, was put in command of the troops he had brought with him, and made south for Arta. Alexios Strategopoulos had retired to the headquarters that John Palaiologos had set up at Neopatras, and from there opened an attack in the direction of Naupaktos. Nikephoros met him in the mountains of Trikorpho, to the south of Loidoriki. A battle was fought, and the imperial army suffered a severe defeat. Among the prisoners taken was Strategopoulos himself; but after a treaty had been signed Nikephoros allowed him to leave, with the remnants of his army, for Nicaea.⁶

The Despotate once again extended across the north of Greece, and Michael Palaiologos was compelled to recognize the ephemeral nature of his recent victories. Thessalonike, protected by the closely-guarded fortresses in Macedonia, was so far secure, but Michael might be expected to return to the attack in that quarter at any moment; and the part that Manfred of Sicily had elected to play in the defence and enlargement of the dominions of his father-in-law called for a delaying action if the Despotate was to be held in check long enough to allow for a further assault on Constantinople. The situation was so acute that the Emperor had to send an army to Thessalonike once again under the command of his brother John to detain if not defeat the Despot and his allies, and above all to prevent them from gaining a foothold in Macedonia.⁷

Meanwhile in Nicaea preparations were hurried on for a second attempt to recapture Constantinople. In the winter of 1260 George Akropolites was sent on a diplomatic mission to Bulgaria to secure the continued friendship of Constantine Tichomir and prevent any interruptions from that quarter. A treaty and trade agreement was arranged with the Genoese in March of the following year, by the terms of which Nicaea was assured of naval support against the Venetians, the bitter rivals of Genoa and the only competent defenders of the Latin Empire; and in July 1261 Alexios Strategopoulos was sent to Thrace with a force of eight hundred Bithynian archers to guard the northern and western approaches to the city and terrorize the Latins.⁸

The culmination of fifty-five years of rivalry, intrigue, and bloodshed between the Greeks of the east and the Greeks of the west came with an unexpected suddenness. Strategopoulos had instructions to sound the strength of the defences of Constantinople before taking up his position further west. When he arrived at Selymbria, however, he was informed that almost the whole of the Frankish garrison was absent from the city. The new Venetian Podestà, who had recently arrived from Italy, had invited them to help him appropriate the island of Daphnusia at the Black Sea mouth of the Bosphorus. Constantinople was practically empty of troops. Strategopoulos decided to seize the opportunity, and, acting on information from some of the local peasantry, he managed to introduce some soldiers into the city through a

subterranean passage under the walls. In the dead of night they surprised and overpowered the Frankish guards and hacked open the Gate of Selymbria from inside. On 25 July 1261 a Greek army marched once more into Constantinople. There was a moment of panic when Strategopoulos realized the full significance of what he had done and saw a company of Frankish soldiers advancing on him through the streets. But his Greek accomplices urged him to fight on, and the Franks were soon driven back. To forestall the return of the army from Daphnusia Strategopoulos was then advised to set fire to the city at four points. The Emperor Baldwin fled from the flames and managed to reach the coast, where he took ship for Euboea. But when the Venetian fleet, hearing of the disaster, hurried back from the Black Sea, there was confusion everywhere. The Venetian properties and harbour installations were in flames. It was impossible to effect a landing, and they were forced to content themselves with saving what possessions they could before sailing away. Some three thousand refugees clambered aboard their ships, many of them destined to die of hunger and thirst before they reached safety.

Alexios Strategopoulos, an elderly general with a modest record of achievement, in excess of his orders and on his own initiative, had in one night recaptured the capital of the Byzantine Empire, the strength of whose walls had resisted the combined armies of John Asen and John Vatatzes, and defied the ambitious spirit of Theodore Angelos. Michael Palaiologos, who was encamped at Meteorion, was understandably incredulous when told that the Lord had delivered Constantinople into his hands. But all doubt was removed when a courier arrived from Strategopoulos bringing the regalia of the defeated Latin Emperor. In the following month, after due preparations had been made, Michael VIII entered his capital accompanied by all the pomp of Church and State. A second coronation ceremony was performed in Saint Sophia by the Patriarch, and Alexios Strategopoulos was allowed to make a triumphal procession through the city to commemorate his achievement. The legitimate Emperor John Laskaris was left forgotten and neglected in Nicaea; and the memory of his name was soon erased from the minds of men by the glory and by the deliberate cruelty of his former protector.⁹

A Greek Emperor was once again on the throne. But his

enemies were well aware that his triumph had been largely an accident of fortune. For the Despots of Epiros the victory of Alexios Strategopoulos, whom they themselves had so easily defeated, must have been galling in the extreme; and the coronation of Michael VIII in Constantinople only accentuated the bitter rivalry that had grown up between Epiros and Nicaea during the years of exile. Far from offering up prayers of gratitude for the deliverance of the Byzantine Empire from the Latins, Michael Angelos satisfied his resentment by continuing to make war on its new Emperor. Aided and abetted by Manfred of Sicily he began a new campaign early in 1262, and once again an imperial army led by Alexios Strategopoulos was sent to drive him back. The victory was Michael's, and the unhappy Strategopoulos, whose alternating fortunes are compared by one historian with those of Cyrus, Hannibal, and Pompey, was taken prisoner for a second time. He was delivered over to Manfred as a hostage for the return of Constance, who was still a captive in Asia Minor. The exchange was soon effected, and Constance was at last allowed to return to her native land. But Strategopoulos, on whom had fallen the supreme honour of the capture of Constantinople, was seen to be too feeble a general to deal with Michael of Epiros. The task was again entrusted to the able hands of the Emperor's brother John.¹⁰

Meanwhile the saintly Theodora tried her diplomacy to promote an understanding between the Emperor and her husband, and made another of her missions of goodwill into the enemy's camp, taking with her her son John. Negotiations took place, and John was finally left in Constantinople to be a life-long security for his father's conduct and to be married according to the Emperor's pleasure. But Michael's jealousy and ambition once again broke the peace that his wife had laboured to bring about, and John Palaiologos was sent to Greece in the autumn of 1263 with orders to enforce submission if persuasion failed. Michael remained adamant; and Palaiologos, after an ineffectual skirmish not far from Thessalonike, returned to the attack in the following year, and compelled the Despot to sign a treaty with his own hand.¹¹

But the surrender of hostages and the signing of treaties in no way broke the strength or humbled the pride of the Despotate. Palaiologos had barely left Greece when Michael renewed his

campaign. The situation clearly demanded the most drastic measures, and the Emperor himself decided to answer the challenge of his most perfidious and persistent enemy. He marched for Thessalonike at the head of a large army in the autumn of 1264. The reputation of Michael's strength must have been great, for the Emperor suspiciously regarded the appearance of a comet in the sky as a presage of disaster, and held up his expedition at Xanthi until the spring of the next year.

But in the meanwhile Michael was deprived of the support of his most useful ally. The Pope had at last found a worthy champion of his cause against the Hohenstaufens in the person of Charles of Anjou; and Manfred of Sicily could spend no more of his resources on the prosecution of campaigns across the water. Michael was left to defend his own territories, and in the summer of 1265 the Byzantine army drove him back across the mountains into Epiros. Emperor and Despot at last negotiated in person. Michael was obliged to cede the town of Ioannina to the Empire, and the marriage was arranged between his eldest son Nikephoros and Anna, daughter of the Emperor's sister Eulogia.¹²

An uneasy peace was thus established between Epiros and Byzantium. But the hostility of the Despots towards the rulers of Constantinople continued, and neither acknowledged the other's right to a sovereign and independent existence. In time the Despotate came to be regarded by the Emperors not as a rebellious offshoot of their Empire but, like the Principality of Achaia and the Duchy of Athens, as a detached province under foreign occupation. As early as 1263 Michael had found himself invited by the Pope to lend his support to Baldwin for the restoration of the Latin Empire; and the defeat of Manfred by Charles of Anjou at the Battle of Benevento in February 1266 gave him an opportunity to reassert his authority over some long-lost territory. Manfred's admiral, Philip Chinardo, married Theodora's sister Maria Petraliphas, and received as dowry Corfu and Kanina, which he had hitherto governed in Manfred's name. He was assassinated soon afterwards on Michael's orders; and the coast of northern Epiros reverted for a brief moment to the Despotate. In June 1266 Michael renewed by argyrobull his former agreement with the merchants of Ragusa, and presumed to grant them free access to all the islands and coast-towns of Epiros. But the vacuum

created by Manfred's death was soon filled by the agents of his conqueror Charles of Anjou; and in 1267 Michael was again forced to abandon his claim. Corfu and most of the Epirote coast passed into the possession of the Angevin Kingdom of Sicily. Michael II died soon afterwards, and his territory was divided between his sons Nikephoros and John Doukas. John established himself at Neopatras, Nikephoros at Arta; and there, centred around its original capital, the Despotate preserved its identity, defiantly proclaiming itself more Greek than the Greeks, and long fostering the illusion that the descendants of its once powerful rulers still held an equal claim to the throne of Byzantium.¹⁸

Hypothetical speculations on the course of history cannot belie the facts. But the injustices done to the Despotate of Epiros by the historians demand some examination of the respective claims of the rival states. The ascendancy was not always with Nicaea, and it must be admitted that there were two critical stages in the development of the Despotate when the fate of the Byzantine Empire hung in the balance. In the years following Theodore's coronation the Kingdom of Thessalonike was, for the reasons of Church and State outlined in its defence by Demetrios Chomatenos, more than the equal of the Kingdom of Nicaea. Its territory and its resources were greater; and the claims of its ruler to be the one true Emperor of the Romans were at least no less valid than those of John Vatatzes. Only the jealousy and misrepresentation of the Nicene historians have clouded the issue in this respect. Again, at the battle of Pelagonia, fighting on his own terrain and supported by his powerful allies, Michael II had everything to gain. Twice the Despotate was tried and found wanting. But there is little doubt that, if Theodore's miscalculations had not driven him into one fatal mistake at Klokotnitsa, or if the unnatural alliance of Greeks and Latins could have been held together on the field of Pelagonia, the prize of the Byzantine Empire would have fallen to Epiros rather than to Nicaea.

¹ Akropolites 171. Michael Palaiologos in his autobiography records the conquests of his armies in the most general terms as 'Akarnania and Aitolia, the country about the Gulf of Krissa, and the whole of Epiros both old and new, with Illyria as far as Durazzo, and all Phthiotis'. Palaiologos, *De Vita Sua*, ed. Troitski, p. 6. See M. Chapman, *Michel Paléologue*, pp. 171-2.

² Akropolites 171-2. Pachymeres, I, 107. Akropolites mentions also the wife of Nikephoros; but this contradicts his earlier statement that she died in 1258, either from natural causes or through the ill-treatment of her husband (*ibid.*, 154). Romanos (p. 64) supposes that Richard Orsini had already succeeded his father as Count of Cephalonia. But the earliest date that can be assigned to Richard is 1264 (see document in Miklosich and Müller, V, pp. 16-17).

³ Akropolites 172-3. Gregoras, I, 79. Pachymeres, I, 108. While in Thessaly John Palaiologos confirmed once again the monastic properties of the Melissenos family. Constantine Melissenos had quarrelled with Michael II and had been deprived of some of the possessions formerly granted to him. See Miklosich and Müller, IV, pp. 384-5.

⁴ Pachymeres, I, 89, alone of the Greek historians records Michael's second appeal to Manfred, and that but briefly. But it is confirmed by an entry in the Journals of Matteo Spinelli da Giovenazzo (R.I.S. VII), pp. 1095-6 (3 December 1259): 'venne lo Dispoto de la Morea, che era coiato de lo Re Manfredo, et sbarca a Vieste, e passao a trovato lo Papa e lo Re'. Del Giudice, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 62-3, argues whether the 'Despot of the Morea' was Villehardouin or Nikephoros. But the former was then in captivity. It could perhaps refer to Michael himself, but this seems improbable. Nikephoros was Manfred's brother-in-law. His visit to the Pope may be taken either as a forlorn effort to reconcile Alexander IV and Manfred, or (more likely) as a confusion with Spinelli's account of Baldwin's visit to Italy, which probably took place not in August 1259, but after 1261. See Del Giudice, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-6; Norden, *Papsttum und Byzanz*, p. 333, note 3; Geanakoplos, *op. cit.*, p. 114, note 75. Durazzo was again in Nicene control for a short time after 1259. The Patriarch Nikephoros, after the death of Arsenios in 1260, transferred Bishop Niketas from Thessalonike to the Metropolis of Durazzo. Pachymeres, I, 117, 126.

⁵ Akropolites 173-5. Pachymeres, I, 79-80, 90-105.

⁶ Pachymeres, I, 89. Meliarakes (p. 549) takes 'Trikoryphos' to mean Trikkala. But Palaiologos in his autobiography (*loc. cit.*) specifically mentions 'the country about the Gulf of Krissa', and his brother had already penetrated as far as Levadia.

⁷ Pachymeres, I, 137, speaks highly of the prowess of the Italian soldiers, but gives their conquests only in the vaguest terms, as 'Illyria and new Epiros'. The part played in these operations by Manfred's regent in Epiros, Philip Chinardo, is nowhere stated.

⁸ Akropolites 175-6, 181. Chronicle of the Morea 1277-84. *Annales Januenses*, ed. C. Imperiale, pp. 41-3.

⁹ Akropolites 181-9. Gregoras, I, 78-90. Pachymeres, I, 137-73. Chronicle of the Morea 1285-315. Sanudo 115. Longnon, *l'Empire latin*, pp. 225-8.

¹⁰ Gregoras, I, 90-2. Pachymeres, I, 89.

¹¹ Pachymeres, I, 107, 214-15. Michael's son John was married to the second daughter of the Sebastokrator Constantine Tornikes (Pachymeres, I, 108).

¹² Gregoras, I, 92, 98-9. Pachymeres, I, 241-4.

¹³ Letters of Urban IV, in Luke Wadding, *Annales Minorum*, vol. IV, nos. 5 and 6, p. 212. The Pope flattered Michael with the title of 'Thessalonicae princeps'. Pachymeres, I, 508. Buchon, *Nouvelles Recherches*, I, i, pp. 195-201; II, i, pp. 309-11. Del Giudice, *Codice Diplomatico di Carlo I e II di Angiò*, vol. II, i, pp. 30-44. For the argyrobull to Ragusa (formerly ascribed to Michael I, and dated to 1206) see Miklosich and Müller, III, no. 12, p. 58; M. Markovic, *Byzantine Sources in the Archives of Dubrovnik*, *Sbornik Radova XXI, Vizantoloski Institut*, I (Belgrade 1952), no. III, pp. 225-38, 260-1 (who assigns it tentatively to 1251). The date of Michael's death is given by modern historians as 1267 or 1271. The latter seems more probable, though his son Nikephoros, as Despot, signed an argyrobull in favour of his cousin Nicholas Melissenos as early as September 1266, and referred in it to η βασιλεία μου. Miklosich and Müller, IV, pp. 349-52.

Michael II. Externally the walls are decorated with the geometrical patterns in brick and tile which are so predominant a feature of the contemporary churches of Epiros and Macedonia, a form of decoration much favoured in the churches of the Despotate in later years. Certain fragments of finely sculptured marble now built into the door of the narthex originally formed the 'templon' of the church and are probably the work of sculptors from Constantinople who took refuge in Epiros after 1204.⁶

Inside the church, on either side of the nave, stand two square marble tombs decorated with carvings of equally fine workmanship. That on the north is covered with a marble slab which bears the remains of a long metrical inscription; and fragments of a similar inscription from two other tombs have been pieced together.⁷ In the first tomb were buried two of the sons of Michael II by Theodora, Demetrios (or Michael) Koutroulis Angelos and John, both of whom are known to have been for a time in Constantinople, the former after his father's death, the latter as a hostage of Michael Palaiologos in 1263.⁸ The inscription suggests that they met an untimely end, perhaps at the instigation of their brother Nikephoros on their return to Epiros. Interpretation of the other inscription is largely conjectural. The names of Manuel (as *αὐτοκράτωρ*), of Michael (as Despot and *δεσπότης δυσμοκράτωρ*), as well as some member of the Petraliphias family occur; and there is at least a measure of evidence for supposing that Michael II was buried in one of the tombs.⁹ It can be concluded that the Monastery church of the Blachernai was used as the family vault by the Despots of Epiros for several generations. Local tradition also connects the church with the name and devotions of St. Theodora herself; and there is supposed to have been a subterranean passage from the church of St. George in Arta to the convent of the Blachernai, which served her as a way of retreat from her worldly cares.¹⁰

A little to the other side of the town of Arta, on the present road to Amphilochia, stands a small church whose renovation can be assigned to the period of Manuel's régime in Thessalonike and the early years of Michael II's rule in Epiros. It is now known as the Virgin of Bryoni (*Παναγία τοῦ Μπρωνή*), a name that it acquired in Turkish times. Architecturally this church is in the form of a simple basilica with three naves, to which has been

added a transept surmounted by a squat dome. The walls are lavishly decorated with designs worked in brick, but less carefully executed than those which adorn the church of the Blachernai. On the north and south gables of the transept an inscription written in red tiles forms part of the decoration. In its entirety it reads as follows: *Στα[ν]αράπιγιον πατριαρχικόν/τὸ ἄγιον στένην παρὰ Γερμανοῦ καὶ οἰκον[υμενικοῦ πατριάρχον]*. From this it appears that the church was a patriarchal foundation outside the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Arta; and its conversion from a small basilica into a cruciform building with a dome can be placed within the Patriarchate of Germanos II, and connected with the visit to Epiros of the Patriarch himself in or about 1238.¹¹

In the plain to the south-west of Arta stands the church of St. Demetrios Katsouri, once the chapel of a Patriarchal monastery. Its original construction as a three-naved basilica can be assigned to the tenth century, but a similar renovation was carried out in the thirteenth century, when a building of the cross-in-square form with a cylindrical dome was superimposed. The church bears little or no exterior decoration, but inside a number of frescoes of saints have been brought to light from beneath the seventeenth century paintings on the walls. These may be dated to the early thirteenth century, and may have been painted during the early years of the Despotate by refugee artists from Constantinople at the time of the reconstruction of the church. They are thus among the earliest known paintings in the district of Arta.¹²

The Patriarch Germanos II is known to have granted jurisdiction over the Monastery of St. Demetrios Katsouri to John, Bishop of Arta, on John's request, after the Bishop had settled his differences with Apokaukos of Naupaktos.¹³ The Patriarchal decree concerning this privilege was confirmed by a local synod in April 1229, and mentions also the Monastery of St. John the Forerunner which had been founded by the Despot Constantine Angelos, Theodore's brother. This Monastery traditionally occupied the site of the now ruined Mosque of Faik-Bey, across the river from Arta; and the discovery of part of a relief of St. John inside the precincts of the Mosque seems to lend weight to the tradition.¹⁴

The only two surviving buildings whose original foundation can

be attributed to the early part of the Despotate are the Monastery churches of the Transfiguration at Galaxidi, on the Bay of Itea in the Corinthian Gulf, and of the so-called Kato Panagia on the southern outskirts of Arta. Both of these are constructed on the simple pattern of a basilica heightened towards the eastern end by a transverse barrel-vault, saving the expense but giving something of the effect of a dome as seen from the interior. This form of construction was particularly common in Epiros during and after the thirteenth century, though its invention is not to be ascribed to the architects of the Despotate.¹⁵ The little church at Galaxidi was reputedly built by Michael II as a penance and thank-offering for his deliverance from the wiles of the lady Gangrene. Its foundation forms the central theme of the eighteenth century Chronicle of Galaxidi, which was found within its walls; and the monkish Chronicler records that Michael's name was once inscribed on a column before the narthex.¹⁶

The Monastery of Kato Panagia (or *Παναγία τῆς δόσος Βρύσεως*) is still inhabited by a handful of monks. Its foundation by Michael II is attested by Job in his Life of St. Theodora and confirmed by the inscriptions on the church.¹⁷ The architectural construction of the church is a variety of the 'cross-roofed' form described above. The building has three naves, but the central part of the transverse vault that covers them is raised considerably higher than the rest of the church, thereby increasing the illusion of a dome, while the eastern ends of the naves are lower than the main body of the building. With slight modifications the construction finds an exact parallel in the church of Porta Panagia not far from Trikkala in Thessaly, which is known to have been built by the son of Michael II, John Doukas, in 1283.¹⁸

The monastic dwellings and outhouses surrounding the court of the Monastery are all of later date, but the church itself has retained its original form. The foundations are composed of stones taken from an older building, perhaps formerly on that site, and the columns inside the church are possibly from the same source.¹⁹ The walls are adorned on the outside with a great variety of brick and tile decoration, notably on the apses, where the stone work is intersected by horizontal bands of cable and meander patterns with rosettes and other motifs worked in red tile.²⁰ On the south wall of the transverse gable an inscription

in two horizontal bands forms part of the decoration, with the

 monogram $\Delta \begin{smallmatrix} M \\ | \\ K \end{smallmatrix}$ inset in brick below. The inscription is

unfortunately illegible, but the interpretation of the monogram as $M(i)X(a\eta\lambda) \Delta(o\omega)K(a\varsigma)$ refers it to the founder Michael II.²¹ A second inscription, contemporary with the foundation of the church, is carved on a plaque let into the north wall of the building, and well corroborates the statement of Job that this Monastery (like that at Galaxidi) was erected by Michael as a sign of his repentance. The inscription reads:

†Πύλας ἡμῖν ἀραιξον, ὃ Θ(ε)οῦ μ(ῆτ)ερ,
τῆς μετανοίας, τοῦ φωτὸς οὖσα πύλη.

 The accompanying monogram: $\Delta \begin{smallmatrix} | \\ P \end{smallmatrix}$ can be deciphered as M

$\Delta(\varepsilonσπότη) M(iχαηλ) \Pi(aράσχον) P(\nuσν) (\deltaμαρτημάτων)$.²² The interior of the church is decorated with frescoes of the eighteenth century, but portions of earlier paintings have been uncovered in the apse which may perhaps be assigned to the early thirteenth century.²³

The town of Arta itself retains many associations with the name and memory of Michael and Theodora. Tradition has it that the repair and rebuilding of the imposing walls which still surround the citadel were begun by Michael. Certainly by the time of his son and successor Nikephoros the town was amply defended; and the new importance assumed by Arta as the capital of the Despotate after the fall of Thessalonike might well have led its ruler to strengthen its walls.²⁴ But only one of the many surviving monuments within the modern town can with certainty be connected with the first period of the Despotate. Amongst the good works attributed to the saintly Theodora by her biographer was the foundation of a convent in Arta dedicated to St. George the Martyr, in which she herself took the veil and ended her days after the death of her husband, 'having adorned its chapel with many offerings of vestments and treasures'. On her death she was buried within its walls, and the convent was thenceforth dedicated to her blessed memory.²⁵

Of this foundation there now remain only the chapel and the arched gateway into the court. The main body of the chapel of St. Theodora consists of three naves, the central one being of a greater height than the others and lit by a form of clerestory in its upper walls. In general appearance it has many affinities with some of the small churches of Kastoria, notably the Taxiarches of the Metropolis, which is to be dated to the eleventh century.²⁶ The tradition that it was founded by Theodora is doubtless erroneous; but to her may be attributed the addition of the large domed narthex to the west end of the building, which from its construction and decoration is manifestly later than the church itself. The squat form of the dome, which is the central feature of this narthex, is of very similar construction to the two subsidiary domes on the Blachernai church, and suggests that the two buildings were designed by the same architect. The exterior walls of the narthex are decorated with a veritable carpet of brick-work, with horizontal bands of dog-tooth, meander, and cable patterns; and the north and south gables are covered with a pattern of vertical wavy lines terminating in a broad horizontal band of criss-cross design, all worked in red tiles. Above the central door of the west wall are two crosses with 'wheel' designs carved in brick. Such a wealth of ornamentation, though appearing in a cruder form in the earlier churches of Kastoria and in a lesser degree in the later churches of the Despotate, is unparalleled elsewhere in Epiros.²⁷

Job does not record where Theodora was buried in the church, but there is every reason for supposing that the tomb now standing in the narthex marks the site of her grave. Its present state, however, bears very little relation to the original. Excavation and inspection carried out in 1873 revealed that there was a tomb containing certain remains underneath the narthex; and the monument as it now stands is a reconstruction embodying only one marble slab of an earlier sarcophagus. This has been identified as an inept but faithful copy of a thirteenth century relief. On the left and right are represented the Archangels, patrons of the House of Angelos; and in the centre, standing beneath an archway flanked by two columns, are Theodora and a smaller figure over whom she extends her left hand in benediction. Theodora is shown in the full regalia of the Byzantine

court, holding in her right hand the sceptre topped with a double cross, and wearing the long purple-sleeved robe ornamented with bands of precious stones in the form of a cross from head to foot. On her head she wears a crown, from which a veil descends about her shoulders, indicating her sanctity and the fact that she died as a nun. The small figure beside her is of a man also wearing imperial robes and holding a sceptre, and crowned with the semi-circular form of crown used by the Byzantine Emperors from the twelfth century onwards. The identification of this figure is uncertain, but from its comparative size it would seem more likely to be Nikephoros, Theodora's son, who no doubt commissioned the erection of the tomb, than Michael II, her husband.²⁸

The other churches in Arta and district do not come within the scope of this work. They were built in later years by the successors of Michael II. The famous church of the Paregoritissa in the town and the church of the Panagia Bellas (or *Kόκκινη Εκκλησία*) at Voulgareli to the north of Arta, like the Porta Panagia church in Thessaly, were erected by Michael's sons Nikephoros and John in the 1280's. But the tradition of Byzantine art and architecture, brought to the Despotate by refugees from the capital at the time of the Latin conquest, was preserved in Greece and carried on in the following century by local Epirote craftsmen who evolved their own experimental and highly ornamented styles, and, like the artists of Serbia and Mistra, reinterpreted the rigid tradition and infused new life into it with their own ideas.

ii. Coinage

The classification of the coinage of the Despotate of Epiros and the Kingdom of Thessalonike has been but little attempted. But the coins which can with certainty be assigned to the period before 1261 help to illustrate the pretensions of the Despots to the imperium, and their sense of continuity with the Byzantine Empire. It seems unlikely that coins were minted in any great numbers for general purposes in the Despotate. Gold pieces of the Emperor Manuel Komnenos ('manolata') were in use in Corfu at

least in 1207, and the annuity that Michael I promised to Venice three years later was to be paid in hyperpera.²⁹ The tax on Naupaktos in Theodore's time was also levied in hyperpera, no certain types of which have, as yet, been attributed to the Despots.³⁰ Within the capitals of Thessalonike and Arta new currency may have been gradually introduced, but the money in wider circulation must have been that issued from Constantinople in the twelfth century.

It seems unlikely that any separate coinage was introduced by the Despots until after the capture of Thessalonike and the coronation of Theodore as Emperor in 1225. A few bronze coins have in fact been tentatively assigned to Michael I, but the evidence is inconclusive and the types very little different from those assigned to Michael II. That there was a special mint at Thessalonike after 1225, however, has been indisputably established, and it seems almost as certain that a second mint was started at Arta by Michael II after that at Thessalonike had fallen into the hands of the Nicene Emperors. Two fine lead seals of Michael I have, however, survived. One, originally covered with silver, bears a full-figure representation of the Archangel Michael with the orb and sceptre in his hands. The other, found in Corfu, shows the Archangel with sword and sceptre. The inscription on the reverse of the first reads:

τσφράγισμα γράφων Μιχαὴλ Δούκα φέρω
σεβαστοκρατοροῦντος εὐθαλοῦς κλάδον†

and on the second:

σφραγίδα τὴν σὺν Μιχαὴλ πρωτοστάτᾳ
ποθεῖ σεβαστὸς Μιχαὴλ ὁ τοῦ Δούκα.

The Archangel Michael was the patron of the House of Angelos, and had been represented on the coinage of the Emperors Isaac II and Alexios III.³¹

The old types of coinage minted by the Komnenos and Angelos Emperors provided the prototypes for the Emperors at Thessalonike. The coins attributed to Theodore Angelos are for the most part clearly modelled on the same pattern. Theodore, crowned and robed as Emperor, holding the orb and sceptre in

his hands, stands beside St. Demetrios, the patron of Thessalonike, with the labarum or an ornamented cross between them. The reverse shows either the Virgin or Christ with the Gospels.³² One coin shows Theodore standing on his own, crowned and dressed in the imperial robe and mantle, holding the labarum and orb, and bears the inscription Θεόδωρος Δεσπότης Κομνησοδούκας.³³ Another type of coinage issued by Theodore shows busts of himself and St. Demetrios with the inscription †Θεόδωρος δεσπότης ὁ Δούκας on the reverse. It has been pointed out that coins of this type, with two busts on the obverse and an inscription only on the reverse, had last been minted by the Emperor Nikephoros III (1078-1081). A very similar coin, however, was issued by Alexios III, and this may well have provided Theodore with a prototype.³⁴

After Theodore's defeat in 1230 his brother Manuel continued to mint coins of a similar type. Manuel and St. Demetrios appear holding between them a cross or the labarum.³⁵ Manuel also appears on his own, or, on one silver coin, in company with the Virgin, who is in the act of crowning him.³⁶ One bronze coin attributed to Manuel depicts him together with St. Constantine, holding between them a cross with two cross-bars, and, on the reverse, a half-figure representation of the Archangel Michael with wings outspread and sword in hand. This would seem to be the only coin of Thessalonike or Epiros on which St. Constantine appears, though he had been favoured by Alexios III and also, significantly enough, by John Vatatzes at Nicaea, to whom Manuel was obliged to pay deference.³⁷

Manuel seems also, however, to have been responsible for a new and unusual type of coin. It shows the Emperor himself and St. Demetrios each seated on a throne, holding between them a building with three towers above which is the inscription πόλις Θεσσαλονίκη and Μανονὴλ Δεσπότη (ς) ὁ ἄγιος Αημήτριος. The reverse of this coin shows once again the Archangel Michael with outspread wings.³⁸ There are many peculiarities in this type. It has been remarked that the Emperor was only rarely represented sitting on his throne on Byzantine coins of the previous centuries. In the coinage of Bulgaria and Serbia, however, the type was common enough; and it is interesting to observe that John Asen of Bulgaria minted coins showing himself enthroned

rather than standing. The idea may well have been adopted by Manuel out of politeness or flattery to the ruler of Bulgaria whose daughter, Maria Beloslava, he had married, and who was to so great an extent the protector of his Kingdom. The representation of the Emperor holding up his city for inspection in this manner appears to be unprecedented in Byzantine coinage though not in Byzantine art. A seal of Boniface of Montferrat as King of Thessalonike shows the walls of the city, but the differences between this and Manuel's coin are far greater than the similarities, and there can be little if any connexion between them. It is unlikely that the Emperors of Thessalonike would consciously have adopted the devices of their enemies.³⁹ The building being held up is clearly a symbolic representation of the walls and towers of the city of Thessalonike, as the inscription indicates. After the coalition of John Asen and John Vatatzes Manuel might well feel it advisable to advertise to the world that his imperium was confined to the walls of Thessalonike.⁴⁰

The short reign of John Angelos (1237-1244) produced some particularly interesting coinage. There are one or two coins of what may be called the 'conventional' type, showing John and St. Demetrios standing side by side with the cross between them, or John being blessed by Christ. The reverse of these coins has the familiar figure of St. Michael (or St. George) with outspread wings.⁴¹ John was quite a young man at the time when his father placed him on the throne of Thessalonike. He is therefore represented clean-shaven and his coins, even where the inscription *'Ιωάννης Δεσπότης* is lacking, can be easily distinguished from those of his more mature and bearded relatives. He was also, as has been noted, a fervently religious man with a strong conviction of the sanctity of his position as Emperor; and certain of his coins seem to reflect this conviction in a striking manner. The Emperor John is shown standing alone, unbearded, with the labarum in his right hand and the 'akakia' in his left, between two great outstretched wings.⁴² The 'winged Emperor' is a motif previously unknown in Byzantine coinage or art, and begins with the coins of John Angelos at Thessalonike. The idea was in fact taken up by the later Emperors Michael VIII and Andronikos II, who continued to make use of the mint at Thessalonike. But the type does not occur on the coins of Theodore or Manuel Angelos,

It is therefore not sufficient to suppose that the wings are intended to be a symbol of the Archangel Michael, or the winged Emperor a personification of the Archangel. Doubtless there was some association of ideas between the representations of the winged Archangel and the House of Angelos. But the Emperors of Thessalonike were not over-proud of their Angelos connexions. St. Demetrios appears more frequently on their coins than St. Michael or St. George; and they preferred always to sign themselves by the older and more illustrious names of Komnenos and Doukas. If John Angelos had wished merely to emphasize his relationship with the Angelos dynasty it would have been simpler and clearer to inscribe the name on his coins instead of adopting the unprecedented device of showing himself with wings.⁴³

Another type minted at Thessalonike shows John Angelos (*'Ιωάννης Δεσπότης'*) crowned and robed, holding in his left hand the sceptre, and in his right the vexillum. The reverse of this coin shows simply an open wing.⁴⁴ The representation of a wing or wings disassociated from the angel is also an innovation in Byzantine coinage. The wings are found not only attached to the Emperor, but also to the Cross, or, as in this type, on their own.⁴⁵

The predilection for wings that John Angelos seems to have experienced may not have had much precedent in the art of Byzantium. But in central European art of the period and of the previous century the wing motif was common enough. The noble families of Europe, and especially of Germany, frequently employed winged devices on their coins and medals.⁴⁶ It has been suggested therefore that the artists of Thessalonike may have been subject to influences coming in from central Europe by way of the Danube trade-routes and by virtue of the exchange of ideas which must have resulted from the Latin conquest, particularly in Thessalonike which was the first of the great cities to revert to Greek rule. Moreover, the type of coin minted by John Angelos showing the Emperor with the vexillum or standard in his hand had innumerable precedents in German coinage of the twelfth century.⁴⁷

It may be concluded, therefore, that the innovations in coin types for which John Angelos was responsible, innovations which

proved popular enough to be copied by his successors in Nicaea and Constantinople, were partly due to artistic influences from central Europe. The influences were indirect, however, and it seems impossible to trace any one specific model that might have been used as a prototype. The artists of Thessalonike were rather subject to 'an accumulation of impressions' from Europe and notably from Germany.⁴⁸ There is, however, a marked difference of intention between the similar devices of the artists of central Europe and of Thessalonike. For the aristocratic families of Germany the winged devices employed on their coins were of purely heraldic significance. For John Angelos, on the other hand, the significance was specifically religious. The Emperor appeared winged not for heraldic effect but because he was a 'young and pious prince' whose person and authority were under the special protection of an angel. The open wing outstretched on its own on his coins was similarly a reminder of the divine protection that hovered over his throne.⁴⁹

John's earthly protector, however, was his father Theodore Angelos; and when Theodore was outwitted by John Vatatzes the Emperor of Thessalonike had to content himself with a less exalted idea of his own position. To John and his brother and successor Demetrios as Despots of Thessalonike between the years 1243 and 1246 have been attributed several coins depicting only the Archangel Michael.⁵⁰

After the annexation of Thessalonike to the Kingdom of Nicaea in 1246 the imperial mint started by Theodore Angelos was taken over by John Vatatzes and his successors. The centre of gravity of the Despotate reverted to its original capital at Arta. Michael II Angelos there began to issue coins of his own on the pattern of those formerly minted by his relatives at Thessalonike. He appears on some standing beside St. Demetrios with the Cross held between them;⁵¹ on another with the Virgin,⁵² and on another at the moment of his being crowned by St. Michael.⁵³ This last coin has the figure of St. Demetrios on the reverse, but almost all the other coins attributed to Michael II show the Archangel Michael on the reverse, whom the Despot, like his father before him, evidently regarded as his personal protector. It is significant that on all these coins Michael is shown crowned and robed as Emperor, with the sceptre, the 'akakia', or the orb

in his hands. They are eloquent advertisements for his claim to the title of 'Emperor of the Romans', a claim which the historians ignored; and the appearance of St. Demetrios on his coinage seems to illustrate his aspirations to what he considered to be his hereditary throne of Thessalonike.

One other coin assigned to Michael II may be modelled on the type started by his uncle Manuel. It shows him holding in his right hand a building with three towers and a door, and, on the reverse, the bust of a bearded figure designated as *O AΓ XMΗΛ*. The building may represent the fortress of Arta, or possibly, since there is no 'polis' inscription, one of the churches that Michael is known to have founded. The figure on the reverse can hardly be the Archangel Michael because of the beard and because it has no wings. It may be intended to represent the Despot himself guarded by the name of his divine protector.⁵⁴

Lastly there is one coin showing Michael II standing beside 'a younger prince', presumably one of his sons. Both figures are crowned, and hold between them a Cross with two cross-bars. Michael has what appears to be a standard in his hand, his son holds a sword. The 'younger prince' should almost certainly be identified as Nikephoros, who was Michael's eldest legitimate son and his successor at Arta.⁵⁵

The seals which Michael II appended to his charters to the merchants of Ragusa in 1237 and 1266 have been preserved with the documents.⁵⁶ Both are similar in many respects to his coins and to the seals of his father Michael I which have survived. The first is made of lead, the second of silver. Both show, on the reverse, Michael in the full regalia of a Byzantine Emperor with crown and mantle, holding the labarum in his right hand and the orb in his left. The inscription on either side of this figure reads:

MIXAHAKOMNH NOCOΔOVKAC

and round the edge of the seal:

†ΕΠΙΜΙΧΑΗΔΕ (σποτη) KOMNHNOΔOVKAN

The obverse of both shows the Archangel Michael with outspread wings, armed and bearing his sword. The second of these seals

has the following inscription round the circumference of the obverse:

†ΠΑΡΕΜΒΟΛΗΚΑΘΑΙΠΕΡΑΓΓΕΛΟΥΚΥΚΛΩ

In a later document from Durazzo there is a description of the seal that Michael set to his chrysobull to the citizens of Corfu in 1236 which accords remarkably well with the appearance of the seals on his charters to Ragusa.⁵⁷ It reads as follows:

'In bulla ipsa aurea ex uno latere est angelus et in circulo sunt lictere que dicunt parivole id est apparicio angeli. Et ex alio latere est Majestas ipsius Michaelis cum licteris dicentibus Michael anino (sic) Dux.'

The obverse of this seal must have been very similar to the second of the Ragusa seals, with the Archangel Michael, surrounded by a circular inscription, the 'parivole' being perhaps a transcription of the word *παρεμβολή*. The use of the word 'Majestas' to describe the figure of Michael on the reverse seems to show that he wore the crown and carried the sceptre. The words 'anino Dux' are corruptions of the names Komnenos Doukas.

The seals as well as the coins of the Despotate clearly show that Michael II considered himself an equal claimant and a rightful heir through the families of Komnenos and Doukas to the prerogatives of the Byzantine Emperor. The historians have preserved no record of any coronation ceremony at Arta; but the portrait of St. Theodora on her tomb indicates that Michael and his son Nikephoros were both assumed to be Emperors in their own right. The interesting title of *δυσμοκάτωρ* is applied to Michael on one of the tombs in the Blachernai Monastery; and the founders' inscription in the Church of the Panagia Bellas refers to Nikephoros and his wife Anna as *σωμητροκαραοντες τῶν δυτικῶν φρουρῶν*.⁵⁸ The three chrysobulls known to have been issued under Michael's seal in 1246 bear only the unpretentious signature of 'Michael Doukas the Despot'. But there is one very curious document in the Monastery of Vatopedi on Mount Athos, in the form of a chrysobull confirming certain bequests made to the Monastery and issued in November 1247, the year after the final surrender of Thessalonike to John Vatatzes.⁵⁹ The

impression left by the golden seal is still visible although the seal itself has been lost; and the signature in red ink reads as follows:

Μιχαὴλ ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ Θεῷ πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ
‘Ρωμαίων Δούκας Ἀγγελος Κομνηνός ὁ Παλαιολόγος.

If the date on this chrysobull is correct the signature must be that of Michael II Angelos. But the Despots of Epiros are not otherwise known to have had any right to use the name of Palaiologos; and it is to be observed that one of the witnesses to the signature is the clerk of the Metropolitan of Philadelphiea in Asia Minor. Michael Angelos was, however, concerned in the gift or confirmation of benefactions to two other monasteries on Mount Athos in the preceding year; and there can be no doubt that this chrysobull is original.⁶⁰

If the above objections could be overcome this chrysobull would provide material evidence of the supposed succession of the Despotate to the claims put forward by Theodore at the time of his coronation. But the evidence of the better-authenticated seals and coins is in itself conclusive enough to show that the protracted hostility of the Nicene Emperors towards Michael II was provoked not only by the threat to their boundaries but also by the injury to their pride. After 1261, when the recovery of Constantinople had made meaningless the Despotate's anticipations of the greater glory, the claims to the imperium, which Michael II considered himself to have inherited on the collapse of the Kingdom of Thessalonike, were restricted but not abandoned by the adoption of the title of *δυσμοκάτωρ*. To have recognized the sovereignty of Michael VIII would have been to betray the memory of their former greatness; and rather than pay homage to their enemies the Despots satisfied their pride and asserted their inalienable rights over their own heritage by styling themselves Emperors of the western provinces.

¹ The memory of the Monastery of Peribleptos in Arta, for instance, in which John Apokaukos is known to have stayed, is preserved only in the name of the district of *Περιλήφτης*. See Serapheim, *Dokimion (Δοκίμιον ιστορικῆς τέλος περιλήψεως τῆς Αρτας . . . Αρτης . . .)*, Athens 1884, p. 137.

² See above, pp. 42, 71. The most important of the Byzantine churches in Ioannina seems to have been the cathedral of the Pantokrator. It is said that Ali Pasha, when demolishing some houses in the citadel, unearthed the ruins of a church containing the tomb of Thomas Preljubović, one of the last Despots of Epiros, who

was murdered in 1384. See a manuscript attributed to Kosmas Balanos in 'Ελευθέρια, 2, Ioannina 1924, pp. 37-8 and 41; T. Smart-Hughes, *Travels in Sicily, Greece, and Albania* (1820), vol. I, p. 9.

³ O. Tafrali, *Thessalonique au Quatorzième Siècle*, pp. 44-51; Miller, *Essays on the Latin Orient*, p. 278. The Dux of Thessalonike called George Apokaukos is not otherwise known.

⁴ For Rogoi and Bellas, see below, p. 222.

⁵ The decree is published by P. Kerameus, Συνοδικά γράμματα τοῦ Ἀποκαύκου, *Bυζαντίς*, I (1909), no. 3, pp. 14-20. See also Serapheim, *Dokimion*, pp. 158-9, 367-8; A. K. Orlando, *Bυζαντινά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ἀρτῆς*, *Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημεῖων τῆς Ἐλλάδος* (1937), III, ii, p. 180. The wording of the title of the decree conflicts with that of the text, but Theodore's wife Maria Petraliphias seems to have been instrumental in the affair.

⁶ Orlando, *Bυζαντινά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ἀρτῆς*, pp. 18-19, 26-27.

⁷ Serapheim, *Dokimion*, p. 367. Lambros in *Neos Hellennomemon*, XV (1918), p. 25. Orlando, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-49.

⁸ The inscription reads: μητὴρ γάρ ἡμῶν μία καὶ νήσου μία / εἰς φῶς πα[ρῆξε] . . . / βασιλισσα Δούκισσα Θεοδώρα. . . For John, see above, p. 192. Demetrios married a daughter of Michael VIII.

⁹ Orlando, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-49.

¹⁰ A large relief of the Archangel Michael let into the wall above the south entrance to the church is of later and inferior workmanship, but preserves the tradition of the patronage of the Despote by the Archangel. See Orlando, pp. 40, 41, Plates 7 and 38.

¹¹ Orlando, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

¹² Orlando, *op. cit.*, p. 63; pp. 67-69, Plates 10, 11, 12.

¹³ For Bishop John of Arta and his quarrel with Apokaukos, see below, Appendix on John Apokaukos, pp. 219f.

¹⁴ Serapheim, *Dokimion*, pp. 369-370, in his transcription of the Patriarchal decree reads 'δομηθέσται παρὰ τοῦ παντεγγενεστάτου Κομητοῦ κύρου Κωνσταντίνου'. Orlando, *op. cit.*, p. 58, following the publication of Ralles and Potles, Σύνταγμα τῶν θετικῶν καὶ τερπῶν κανόνων, vol. V, pp. 106-7, reads 'πανεργάτου Κομητοῦ', etc., which would refer to Constantine, Bishop of Arta before 1223. But the name Komnenos indicates the Despot rather than the Bishop. The addition by Constantine of an exo-narthex to the church at Varnakova has already been mentioned (see above, p. 72 note 23). The Monastery of St. John, like the still extant chapel of St. Nicholas Rodiās not far away (built towards the end of the thirteenth century), was a dependency of an older and larger monastery to the south of Arta, dedicated to the Virgin and called Rodiā. See Serapheim, *Dokimion*, pp. 147, 171. Orlando, *op. cit.*, p. 131, note 2.

¹⁵ Millet, *l'Ecole grecque dans l'Architecture byzantine*, p. 50. Later examples of this form of construction ('οταρεντορεῖον') are to be seen in the little church at Kostaniani near Dodona, which dates from the end of the thirteenth century (D. Evangelides, 'Η πετρωτικὴ Χρονικά', VI (1931), p. 258f.), and in the fourteenth century nave of the church of the Dormition at Molyvdoskepastos on the Albanian border (D. M. Nicol, *The Churches of Molyvdoskepastos*, *Annual of the British School at Athens*, XLVIII (1954), pp. 141-153); also in the church of Porta Panagia near Trikkala, and in many small churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the district of Zagori, Delvinaki, and Paramythia.

¹⁶ Chronicle of Galaxidi, ed. Sathas, pp. 197-200. Millet, *op. cit.*, p. 238, fig. 138. See Δελτίον Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογίας, III (1903), p. 65f.

¹⁷ The Monastery went by the name of Παναγία τῆς Βρύσεως at least in the sixteenth century. See Orlando, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁸ Orlando, *Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημεῖων*, I (1935). A contemporary portrait of John Doukas and his wife and family is painted on the walls of this church.

¹⁹ Orlando, *Bυζαντινά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ἀρτῆς*, pp. 77 and note 2, 81.

²⁰ Millet, *l'Ecole grecque*, fig. 121.

²¹ Only three words of the inscription can really be deciphered: . . . δόμον/κρατ(ό)ρων (= αὐτοκρατόρων) (ἡμῶν?) . . . ἀγ(ώ)στω. See Orlando, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

²² Orlando, *op. cit.*, p. 87. See Job, *ed. Migne, P.G.*, vol. 127, cols. 907-8 B. A similar plaque with inscription is let into the wall of the church at Porta Panagia.

²³ Orlando, *op. cit.*, pp. 85, 86, Plates 17, 18.

²⁴ See the Chronicle of the Morea 9156, 9189.

²⁵ Job, *ed. Migne*, 907-908 C.

²⁶ See Orlando, *op. cit.*, p. 94, and in *Ἀρχεῖον τῶν Βυζαντινῶν Μνημεῖων*, vol. IV (1938), i, p. 61f.

²⁷ Orlando, *Bυζαντινά Μνημεῖα τῆς Ἀρτῆς*, pp. 13 and 102.

²⁸ Orlando, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-112, and Plates 3 and 4.

²⁹ See above, p. 19, 31.

³⁰ See above, p. 55.

³¹ G. Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'Empire byzantin*, pp. 426-7, nos. 1 and 2. Sathas, *Chronicle of Galaxidi*, p. 229, Plate I, no. 1. For the coins of Isaac and Alexios, see *British Museum Catalogue of Imperial Byzantine Coins*, vol. II, Plates LXXII, LXXIII.

³² J. Sabatier, *Description générale des Monnaies Byzantines*, vol. II, Plate LXVI, 2 (ascribed to Theodore II Laskaris). W. Wroth, *Catalogue of the Coins of the Vandals, Ostrogoths, and Lombards and of the Empires of Thessalonica, Nicaea and Trebizond in the British Museum*, pp. 193-4, Plate XXVI, 1-3. H. Goodacre, *A Handbook of the Coinage of the Byzantine Empire*, p. 302, no. 3.

³³ Sabatier, *op. cit.*, II, Pl. LXVI, 7. Wroth, *op. cit.*, p. 195, Pl. XXVI, 4. Goodacre, *op. cit.*, p. 303, no. 4.

³⁴ Wroth, *op. cit.*, p. 195, Pl. XXVI, 5. Goodacre, *op. cit.*, p. 302, no. 1. For the coin of Alexios III, see Sabatier, *op. cit.*, II, Pl. LVIII, 9. *B.M. Catalogue of Imperial Byzantine Coins*, II, Pl. LXXIII, no. 13.

³⁵ Wroth, *op. cit.*, p. 199, Pl. XXVI, 10. H. Mattingly, *A Find of Thirteenth-Century Coins at Arta in Epirus*, *Numismatic Chronicle* (5th Series), III (1923), p. 33, Class II; p. 34, Class III; p. 39, Class XII.

³⁶ Wroth, *op. cit.*, p. 197, Pl. XXVI, 6 (a silver nomisma). Goodacre, *op. cit.*, p. 304, no. 1, and nos. 2-4 (one silver and two bronze).

³⁷ Lt.-Col. Longuet, *Deux Monnaies de Manuel l'Ange Comnène Ducas, Empereur de Thessalonique*, *Revue Numismatique* (5me Série), VII (1943), p. 142, no. II.

³⁸ Sabatier, *op. cit.*, II, Pl. LXVI, 11 and 12. Wroth, *op. cit.*, p. 198, Pl. XXVI, 7. Mattingly, *op. cit.*, p. 34, Class IV. Goodacre, *op. cit.*, p. 305, no. 6. Longuet, *op. cit.*, p. 138, no. I.

³⁹ For the seal of Boniface, see Schlumberger, Chalandon, Blanchet, *Sigillographie de l'Orient latin*, p. 193, Plate IX, 4 and 5. T. Bertelè, *L'Imperatore Alato nella Numismatica Bizantina*, p. 40. For the seated Emperor in Bulgarian coinage, see Longuet, *op. cit.*, p. 139. The idea of the presentation of a monument by a person or persons, however, need not also be accounted as a Slav rather than a Byzantine one. Constantinople itself furnishes two outstanding examples, in the mosaics of Constantine offering his 'polis' to the Virgin in Saint Sophia, and Theodore Metochites offering his church in the Chora Monastery.

⁴⁰ A few coins of this type bearing the name Theodore have been somewhat hesitantly attributed to Theodore Angelos. See Mattingly, *op. cit.*, p. 38, Class XI; p. 40, Class XIV. Goodacre, *op. cit.*, p. 303, no. 6. But Bertelè (*op. cit.*, p. 96 note 45) is inclined to attribute them instead to Theodore II Laskaris, who continued to issue coins from the Thessalonike mint after 1254. Bertelè does, however, mention (*op. cit.*, p. 39) one unpublished coin of Theodore Angelos, showing Theodore holding up a model of the castle or city. The type was imitated by Michael VIII and Andronikos II. See *B.M. Catalogue of Imperial Byzantine Coins*, Plates LXXIV, LXXV.

⁴¹ Sabatier, *op. cit.*, Pl. LXVII, 2. Mattingly, *op. cit.*, p. 35, Class V, Plate III, 2. Wroth, *op. cit.*, p. 200. Goodacre, *op. cit.*, p. 306, nos. 1 and 3.

⁴² Bertelè, *op. cit.*, p. 19, no. 1, Plate 1, 1. Much new light has recently been thrown on the coinage of the Empire of Thessalonike by Bertelè (*L'Imperatore Alato nella*

Numismatica Bizantina, Rome 1951), who has collected more than a hundred coins of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries from the Balkans and the district of Thessalonike. Most of the above account of the coinage of John Angelos derives from Bertelè's researches.

⁴³ Bertelè, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-3.

⁴⁴ Bertelè, *op. cit.*, p. 29, no. 38, Plate III, 38.

⁴⁵ Bertelè, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

⁴⁶ Bertelè, *op. cit.*, pp. 54-60. It is particularly interesting to note that the heraldic device of the Montferrat family (illustrated by Bertelè, *op. cit.*, p. 54) was winged, though there is no certain evidence for its use before 1204.

⁴⁷ Bertelè, *op. cit.*, p. 69 and figs. 121 and 124.

⁴⁸ Bertelè, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

⁴⁹ Bertelè, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-49, 64. It is perhaps possible that two coins hitherto attributed to John I of Neopatras (Michael II's son, John Doukas) belong in fact to John Angelos. One shows 'John the Despot' seated on his throne, with the wing of an angel to the left; the other shows him standing, holding the labarum, again with the wing of an angel beside him. See Schlumberger, *Numismatique de l'Orient latin*, p. 381, Plate XIII, 22 and 23.

⁵⁰ Wroth, *op. cit.*, pp. 202-3, Pl. XXVII, 1-7. See Goodacre, *op. cit.*, p. 307.

⁵¹ Mattingly, *op. cit.*, pp. 32-33, Class I, Pl. III, 1. See also Wroth, *op. cit.*, p. 226 and Schlumberger, *Numismatique de l'Orient latin*, p. 373, Pl. XIII, 21 (assigned to Michael I Angelos). Sabatier, *op. cit.*, II, Pl. LIX, 10-11 (assigned to Michael VIII).

⁵² T. Bertelè, *Una Moneta dei Despoti di Epiro*, *B.Z.*, 44 (1951), pp. 25-26, and Plate III (from Albania). Bertelè assigns this either to Michael I or Michael II, and compares Wroth, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXVI, especially nos. 8 and 9.

⁵³ Mattingly, *op. cit.*, p. 36, Class VI, Pl. III, 3.

⁵⁴ Sabatier, II, Pl. LIX, 12 (assigned to Michael VIII). Wroth, *op. cit.*, p. 226. Schlumberger, *Numismatique de l'Orient latin*, p. 373.

⁵⁵ Mattingly, *op. cit.*, p. 37, Class VIII, Pl. III, 5.

⁵⁶ M. Markovic, Byzantine Sources in the Archives of Dubrovnik, *Sbornik Radova* (XXI), *Vizantoloski Institut*, I (Belgrade 1952), no. II, pp. 220-4, and Plates 3 (Text) and 4 a and b (Seal); no. III, pp. 225-38, and Plates 5 (Text) and 6 a and b (Seal). Bertelè, *op. cit.*, *B.Z.*, 44 (1951), pp. 25-26 and Pl. III. Bertelè, following Tafel and Thomas and all authorities up to Markovic, dated the second of these two documents and seals to 1206 and assigned it to Michael I. But Markovic has conclusively shown (especially by the identical signatures) that both documents and seals belong to Michael II, and that 'indiction 9' on the second of them should read either 1251 or 1266 (see Markovic, *op. cit.*, pp. 260-1; and see above, pp. 17 and 193). See also P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (1953), pp. 412-3 notes 27 and 28.

⁵⁷ N. Barone, *Notizie storiche di Re Carlo III di Durazzo*, p. 64. See P. Lemerle, *op. cit.*, 'Ελληνικά, 4 (1953), p. 418.

⁵⁸ A. K. Orlando in 'Η περιοδική Χρονικά', II (1927), p. 166. Pachymeres, I, 30, refers to Michael as 'ο ἐν τῇ Δύσει δεσπότης'.

⁵⁹ M. Goudas, *Βυζαντικά έγγραφα τῆς ἐποχῆς Βαρονεῖου*, 'Επετηρίς', IV (1927), no. 9, pp. 216-8. The date is given as 'November of the year 6756, indiction 6'. The beginning of the MS is lost. In the archives list of the Monastery it appears as 'τεμάχιον χρυσοβούλλου λόγου τοῦ Μιχαήλ Κομνηνοῦ ἀχρονολόγητον'.

⁶⁰ For Michael's benefactions to the Monasteries of St. Paul and Dochiariou, see Müller, *Historische Denkmäler in den Klöstern des Athos*, p. 198; Meliarakes p. 356.

APPENDIX I

THE PETRALIPHAS FAMILY

THE family of Petraliphas was of Norman-Italian stock, being descended from one Peter of Alifa, the son or brother of Robert, Lord of Caiazzo and Alifa near Caserta, who claimed affinity with the Norman Counts of Aversa and Princes of Capua.¹ Peter of Alifa served in the armies of Robert Guiscard during the Norman invasion of Epiros and fought against Alexios Komnenos at Durazzo in 1082.² But he had already quarrelled with his countryman over the possession of Trani and Taranto; and after Guiscard's death he is found serving with the Latin auxiliaries of Alexios at Antioch against the Turks, for which he was rewarded by the Emperor with the Principality of Caesarea. Anna Komnene describes him as 'a man renowned in war, who remained steadfastly loyal to the Emperor'.³

About 1107, after fighting for Alexios against Bohemond at Durazzo, Peter seems to have settled in the region of Didymoteichos (Demotika) in Thrace, where his family remained as feudal lords until the Latin conquest, by which time they appear to have become completely Hellenized. In 1109 Peter is mentioned as a signatory 'of the imperial court' in the treaty imposed upon Bohemond.⁴ Forty years later Niketas records the singular bravery of four Petraliphas brothers from Didymoteichos during Manuel I's siege of Corfu.⁵ Two other members of the family, Nikephoros and Alexios Petraliphas, are mentioned in 1167 and 1175; and amongst the 'archs of Constantinople' who conspired against Isaac II some twenty years later was John Petraliphas, who, under the same Emperor, held the governorship of Thessaly and Macedonia with the rank of Sebastokrator. By that time one section of the family seems to have settled in the district of Servia in northern Thessaly.⁶

After the fall of Constantinople the family divided their loyalties between Epiros and Nicaea. John Petraliphas attached himself to the latter, and is next heard of as Chartoularios to John Vatatzes in 1237.⁷ His sister Maria, however, married Theodore Angelos of Epiros; while of his four children two married into Epirote families, Maria to Sphrantzes or Francesco, perhaps a son of Maio Orsini of Cephalonia, and Theodora, the most illustrious member of the family,

who was later canonized as Saint Theodora of Arta, to Michael II of Epiros.⁸ One other daughter became the second wife of Alexios Slav, the Bulgarian Despot of Melnik; and a son, Theodore, married the daughter of Demetrios Tornikes, the Grand Logothete of Theodore I Laskaris at Nicaea.⁹ Two other members of the family are known to have lived in the thirteenth century, Andronikos Doukas Petraliphias (in 1227), and Nikephoros Komnenos Petraliphias.¹⁰

Two seals have survived inscribed with the name of 'Theodora Petraliphina of Antioch'. This Theodora may have been the wife of a descendant of Peter of Alifa who stayed in Asia Minor when the rest of the family moved to Thrace.¹¹

⁸ Marquis de la Force, *Les Consillers latins d'Alexis Comnène*, *Byzantion*, XI (1936), pp. 158-60. It was formerly supposed that the family was descended from one Petrus de Alpibus, or Pierre d'Aulps. See DuCange, *Commentary on the Alexiad*, ed. Bonn, pp. 507-10; and W. Miller, *Latins in the Levant*, p. 10.

⁹ Anne Comnène, *ed. Leib-Budé*, I, 161; II, 22, 32.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, III, 27, 101.

¹¹ Anne Comnène, *ed. Leib-Budé*, III, 138.

¹² Niketas Choniates, *ed. Bonn*, 110.

¹³ Kinamos, *ed. Bonn*, 260, 292.

¹⁴ Akropolites, *ed. Heisenberg*, 58, 66.

¹⁵ Akropolites 140. Hopf, *Geschichte Griechenlands*, p. 281, suggests that Sphrantzes is a corruption of Francesco (Orsini). It was the same Maria who seduced the Nicene governor of Elbassan, Constantine Chabaron, in 1257. See above, p. 162.

¹⁶ Akropolites 39, 90.

¹⁷ Andronikos occurs in a Serbian document published by A. Soloviev, *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, X (1938), p. 46f. Nikephoros is signatory to a document in Xeropotamou Monastery on Athos, published by F. Dölger, *Aus den Schatzkammern des Heiligen Berges*, (Münich 1948), no. 33, p. 90.

¹⁸ G. Schlumberger, *Sigillographie de l'Empire Byzantin*, p. 690, no. 1. One of the many fragments of marble relief in the precincts of the Monastery of the Blachernai near Arta shows a soldier in coat of mail bearing a sword in his right hand, which Orlando suggests may be a portrait of a Petraliphias (Βυζαντινά Μνημεά της Αρτας 'Αρτης, II, p. 41, and Plate 40).

APPENDIX II

JOHN APOKAUKOS, METROPOLITAN OF NAUPAKTOS

I

THE publication of the writings of John Apokaukos is so widely diffused that a separate bibliography seems necessary.

A. SOURCES

(1) **CODEX PETROPOLITANUS GRAECUS 250-1** (Codex Isaac Mesopotamites), originally in the Monastery of Saint Catherine, Mount Sinai, now in the Public Library of Leningrad. (See Porphyrios Ouspensky, *Catalogus Codd. MSS in Monasterio St. Catherinae in Monte Sina*, vol. I, p. 289f.)

(2) **CODEX HIEROSOLYMITANUS 276** of the collection of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. (See Papadopoulos-Kerameus, 'Ιεροσολυμαντικός Βιβλιοθήκης', vol. I, pp. 338-45 and 441.)

(3) **CODEX BAROCCIANUS GRAECUS 131** in the Bodleian Library of Oxford. (See Coxe, *Catalogus Codd. Graecorum Bibliothecae Bodleianae*, vol. I, no. 129, cols. 223-4).

B. PUBLICATION OF THESE SOURCES

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PAPADOPoulos-KERAMEUS, A., *Περὶ συνοικισμοῦ τῶν Ἰωαννίνων, Λεπτομέρεια* τῆς Ἰστορίας καὶ Ἐθνολογίας Ἐταιρείας, III (Athens 1891), pp. 451-55.

— 'Αθηναϊκὰ ἐκ τοῦ ἰδίου καὶ τριῶν αἰώνων, 'Αριμονία, III (Athens 1902), pp. 209-224.

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- *Κερκυραϊκά, Vizantiski Vremennik*, XIII (1906), pp. 334-51.
- *Συμβολὴ εἰς τὴν ιστορίαν τῆς ἀρχαιεπισκοπῆς Ἀχαΐδος, Sbornik Statej Posvjashennych V.N. Lamanskому*, Part I (St. Petersburg 1907), pp. 227-50.
- *Συνοδικὰ γράμματα τοῦ Ἀποκαύκου, Βιβλίον τοῦ αὐτοῦ*, I (1909), pp. 3-30.
- *Ιωάννης Ἀποκαύκος καὶ Νικήτας Χωνιάτης, Τεσσαρακονταετηρίς της τῆς καθηγεσίας Κ. Σ. Κόντον, Φιλολογικαὶ διατριβαί*, (Athens 1909), pp. 373-82.

Apokaukos, ed. Kurtz=

KURTZ, E., Christophoros von Ankyra als Exarch der Patriarchen Germanos, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, XVI (1907), pp. 120-42.

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BEES, N. A., Ein politisches Treubekentniss von . . . Benedikt . . . von Kefalonia, *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher*, III (1922), Abt. I, pp. 166-7.

- *Ἄειων-Μανονῆλ Μακρός* etc., *Ἐπετηρίς Βυζαντινῶν Σπονδῶν*, II (1925), pp. 123-4.

(2) *Codex Hierosolymitanus* 276

Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Analecta*=

PAPADOPOULOS-KERAMEUS, A., *Ἀνάλεκτα Ἰεροσολυμιτανῆς Σταχυλογίας*, vol. II, pp. 361-2, and vol. IV, pp. 119, 121, 124.

(3) *Codex Baroccianus Graecus* 131

Apokaukos, ed. Petrides=

PETRIDES, S., Jean Apokaukos, lettres et autres documents inédits, *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique russe à Constantinople*, XIV (Sofia 1909), parts 2-3, pp. 1-32.

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CERNOUSOV, E., *From a Byzantine Backwoods of the Thirteenth Century*, Charkow 1914. (In Russian.)

POLAKES, P. K., *Ιωάννης Ἀποκαύκος, Μητροπολίτης Ναυπάκτου*, Jerusalem 1924. (Offprint from *Νέα Στων*, XVIII (1923).)

VASILIEVSKY, V. G., *Journal of the Imperial Public Library of St. Petersburg*, Part IV (1883), pp. 3, 11, 21.

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BEES, N. A., *Ἡ Μονὴ τοῦ Οστοῦ Λονκᾶ τοῦ Στεφάνου*, *Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher*, XI (1934-35), Abt. IV (Berichte der Christlich-archeologische Gesellschaft zu Athen), pp. 179-92.

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PAPADOPoulos-KERAMEUS in *Vizantiski Vremennik*, IX (1904), pp. 849-66.

PAPAVASILIOU in *Ἄθηνα*, XXI (1909), pp. 372-8.

II

An interesting sidelight is thrown on the question of authority amongst the Epirote clergy by a series of letters exchanged between Apokaukos and John, Bishop of Arta.¹ For no sooner had Apokaukos made his peace with Constantine Angelos at Naupaktos than he became involved in an ecclesiastical dispute, in which his authority and patience were put to the test.

His relationships with the majority of his bishops were most friendly, and his rulings on matters of discipline and instruction were universally accepted. He had indeed had an argument with Thomas, Bishop of Dryinopolis, as early as 1218, concerning some clergy from that district who had been deprived of their rights and taken refuge at Naupaktos. But the matter had been amicably settled at a synod at Arta in January 1219.² His differences with John of Arta were of a much more serious nature.

In the early part of 1222 the Bishop of Arta, a suffragan of Naupaktos, is known to have been one Constantine; but in the following year John had succeeded him, elected no doubt by Apokaukos himself. The main cause of the dissension that quickly showed itself between John and Apokaukos was the expropriation of certain monasteries and church properties in the district of Arta which belonged by right to Naupaktos. This act, however, was only one manifestation of John's attempts to assert his independent authority; and Apokaukos was soon

obliged to adopt a firm line with this 'naturally ambitious' character.³ For John took upon himself to impose the penalty of excommunication and suspension from the priesthood on two deacons in Arta, Theodore Semadevmenos and his brother, 'for no plausible reason but merely because they were old friends of Apokaukos and had paid their respects to him during a visit they made to the Peribleptos Monastery at Arta'. Apokaukos retorted by excommunicating John until such time as the penalty laid upon the two deacons should be annulled.⁴ Further, on learning that the elders of the churches in which the deacons had been serving in Arta had received orders from John to withhold from the offenders their dues from the church revenues, Apokaukos inflicted the same penalty on these elders.⁵ The archons of Arta were notified of these decisions by Apokaukos and forbidden to have any contact with their Bishop for the duration of his punishment.⁶

It is significant that Apokaukos conducted this affair not through a synod, but 'by virtue of the authority given to him by God'. John nevertheless succeeded in getting round all the penalties laid on him, and far from being repentant carried his activities to an extent that 'made meaningless all the discipline of the Church'.⁷ Eventually, in August 1227, at a synod convened at Vouitzza, attended by Apokaukos and by the Bishops of Ioannina, Dryinopolis, Butrinto, and Dragomesti, the unfortunate Theodore Semadevmenos was allowed to plead his case. All the members sided with him, and John released him from his punishment, only to recant immediately afterwards. The deacon thereupon appealed to Apokaukos, and from fear of thus creating a precedent, John released him once more. His innocence was officially confirmed by a specially held synod at Arta in April 1228, at which Apokaukos made it clear for the future that, according to the canons of the Church, any priest rejected by his Bishop had the right of appeal to the Metropolitan of his diocese, whose word was final.⁸

Subsequent relationships between John of Arta and Apokaukos seem to have been much improved; and, after a serious flood in the plain of Arta which damaged much ecclesiastical property and destroyed the Bishop's palace, Apokaukos himself wrote to Theodore Angelos asking him to fulfil a promise that he had made to defray the cost of a new building which would be 'a memorial to him for ever'.⁹ Moreover, shortly after the synod at Arta Apokaukos recognized John's rights over at least two of the disputed monasteries, that of St. Demetrios Katsouri and that of St. John the Forerunner.¹⁰

These letters refute the statement of Meliarakes (p. 190) that John Apokaukos was already dead by 1228. No doubt his decision to resign

from the cares of the world was accelerated by his differences with John of Arta; and writing to Demetrios Chomatenos early in 1229 he refers to himself as 'τοῦ σοῦ Ναυπάκτου ποτέ',¹¹ which suggests that he had already left Naupaktos and fulfilled the desire that he had earlier expressed to end his days as a monk.¹² It seems, however, that he continued to manage some of the affairs of his diocese until his successor, Niketas Choniates, was appointed from Nicaea soon after 1230; for the letter has survived which he sent to the Bishops of Aetos, Acheloos, Butrinto, and Dragomesti, ordering them to proceed to the ordination of the bishops-elect of Vouitzza and Bellas in 1229. In this he professes himself unable to perform any further clerical duties owing to his ever-increasing illness, which seems to have taken the form of paralysis.¹³

In one of several letters written to the Bishop of Ioannina after his resignation Apokaukos states his intention of returning to the Monastery of St. Luke of Stiris, which was again in Greek hands. But this wish was never realized; and in 1233, at the time of the visit of the Patriarch's legate Christopher, he was living as a monk at Kozyle to the south-west of Ioannina, and it seems likely that he died there.¹⁴

¹ These letters are published by P. Kerameus in *Bυζαντίς*, I (1909), pp. 3-30.

² Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Bυζαντίς*, I (1909), no. 1, p. 8.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁴ *Ibid.*, nos. 4 and 5, pp. 20-1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, no. 5, p. 21.

⁶ *Ibid.*, no. 6, pp. 21-2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, no. 9, p. 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26. The synod was held on 15 August 1227 for the purpose of electing a bishop to the widowed See of Vouitzza.

⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 9, pp. 23-7.

¹⁰ See document in Ralles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα*, V, 106-7.

¹¹ Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Sbornik Lamanskumu*, no. 4, p. 238.

¹² Apokaukos, ed. Petrides, no. 2, p. 4.

¹³ See N. A. Bees in *Eπαντηρίς*, II (1925), pp. 141-2.

¹⁴ Apokaukos, ed. Kuritz, *B.Z.*, XVI (1907), no. 6, p. 127f. N. A. Bees, *op. cit.*, *Byz.-neugr. Jahrbuch*, XI (1934-35), Abt. IV, p. 190.

APPENDIX III

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE DESPOTATE OF EPIROS

FROM the writings of John Apokaukos and Demetrios Chomatenos, combined with other sources, it is possible to make at least a partial reconstruction of the provincial and ecclesiastical division of the Despotate in the thirteenth century; and the researches of modern travellers and archaeologists in Epiros, though directed mainly towards the location of classical sites, are of some help in the identification of the mediaeval towns and fortresses that have fallen into ruins.

For many centuries before the time of the Latin conquest the country had been divided into Old Epiros, or the district between the Ambracian Gulf and the Akrokerainaian promontory, and New Epiros, stretching from Akrokerainaia as far north as the river Drin in the region of Skodra (or Skutari). Old Epiros constituted the Theme of Nikopolis, New Epiros that of Dyrrachion or Durazzo. The administration seems to have been shared between Arta and Ioannina in the former and Berat and Durazzo in the latter. For ecclesiastical purposes the centre of affairs in the south was the Metropolis of Naupaktos on the Gulf of Corinth. Suffragan bishoprics in Akarnania and Aitolia were those of *Dragomesti* (Astakos),¹ *Acheloos*, whose seat may have been at *Aitoliko* (or Anatoliko) to the north-west of Mesolongi, *Aetos* in the central hills of Xeromeros, and *Vonitza* (or Bonditza) on the southern shore of the Ambracian Gulf.² Further north, in Epiros proper, were the bishoprics of *Arta*, *Ioannina*, *Bellas*, *Kozyle* (with *Rogoi*), *Butrinto* (Bouthroton, Bythrotum) opposite Corfu, *Chimarra* further up the coast, and *Dryinopolis*, all dependent on Naupaktos.

Bellas lies some twenty miles to the north and east of Ioannina in a well-watered plain of streams tributary to the Kalamis (Thyamis). The Bishopric, earlier known as Photike-Bellas, was merged with that of Konitsa in the eighteenth century; and the small hill near the ancient monastery and modern Theological College bears extensive remains of Byzantine fortification and buildings.³

The castle of *Rogoi* stands a little off the present road from Preveza to Arta, some twenty-two miles from the former, on the west bank of the Louros river. The Bishopric of *Kozyle* included this castle and covered the district called Lámari to the west and as far south as the

ancient Roman town of Nikopolis.⁴ The Monastery of Kozyle to which Apokaukos retired still stands at the foot of the famous Zalongo hill to the north-east of the village of Kamarina; but it has long been deserted and bears little relation to its original condition.

Dryinopolis lay in the valley of the Drin river below the modern Argyrokastro. It seems to have been founded after the ruin of the ancient Hadrianopolis, whose remains lie some ten miles further up the valley, and it was in turn deserted with the foundation of Argyrokastro in more recent years.⁵

The 'Theme' of *Vagenetia*, which comprised the ancient districts of Thesprotia and Kassiopeia seems, like Acheloos and Dryinopolis, to have formed a separate province for administrative purposes.⁶ Its most important towns were the inland port of *Glyky*, situated at the point where the Acheron emerges from the mountains of Suli, and (at least in later times) *Aidonati*, the modern Paramythia.⁷ The Church of Vagenetia was dependent upon the Bishop of Butrinto, though it shared in the privileges granted by Theodore to the Church of Corfu in 1228. The islands of *Corfu* and *Leukas* were both independent Metropolitan Sees.

New Epiros was divided between the provinces of Durazzo and Berat. *Berat* (Bellegrada) was one of the many suffragan bishoprics of the See of Ochrida. *Durazzo* was a Metropolis in its own right. To the south-east of Berat lay the important harbour of *Avlona* (or Valona) and the inland town of *Kanina*. The position of *Glavinitza*, mentioned as a 'chartolariate' of Durazzo, has been disputed, but it seems to have been situated near the Akrokerainaian promontory below the site of the ancient Oricum, where there are ruins of a large Byzantine church.⁸ The coastal district to the north of Aylona, around the estuary of the Voiussa (or Aous) river, was known as Sphenaritza (Sfinarsa) or the *Σφηναρίται λόφοι* in the thirteenth century.⁹

In the hinterland of Durazzo the Despotate bordered on the territory of the Albanian chieftains. Since the eleventh century the name of the old Illyrian Albanopolis and its inhabitants the Albani had been applied to the district between Durazzo and Skodra (Skutari) on the west and Prizren (Prizdrianon) and Ochrida on the east. The centre of 'Arbanum' was the natural fortress of *Kroia*, which lies in the mountains between the rivers Mat and Ismi to the north-west of Durazzo; and the rulers of Kroia also controlled the strategic position of *Elbassan* (or Albanon) on the main eastern route from Durazzo to Thessalonike. The Bishops of Kroia and of *Cerninik* (Tzernikon) to the north-east of Elbassan were nominally dependent upon Ochrida.¹⁰

The centre of the Bulgarian provinces which were temporarily

annexed to the Despotate was the town of *Ochrida* on the eastern shore of the great Lake of Ochrida, and guarding the main overland route, the *Via Egnatia*, between Durazzo and Thessalonike. The diocese of Ochrida and 'All Bulgaria' in the thirteenth century comprised most of the southern section of the districts placed under its jurisdiction by Samuel of Bulgaria, and again by Basil II in 1020.¹¹ Under Ochrida itself came the towns of *Prespa*, *Mokros* (or Mokra, on the west side of the Lake), *Kicevo* (Kitzavis), and *Dibra* (or Devrai) to the north.

The Byzantine town of *Prespa* was on or near the site of the modern village of that name, on the eastern shore of Lake Mala Prespa. Kastoria was the principal bishopric of the area (*πρωτόθρονος*) as it had been in the eleventh century, and included *Korytza* (Kourestos), *Devol* (Deavolis), and *Kolone* (Koloneia).¹² Devol possessed two important castles in the middle ages, no traces of which now remain, though they are believed to have been situated in the region of Lake Malik, through which flows the river Devol, to the south of Ochrida.¹³ *Koloneia* was the name given to the district in the hills to the south of the plain of Korytza, centred around the sources of the river Osum or Apsus, which flows into Berat.¹⁴

To the east of Ochrida were the towns and bishoprics of *Moglena* (Meglen-Pajik) on the river Moglenitza, which runs to the north-east of *Vodena* (Widin-Edessa), comprising the district of Lake *Ostrovon*, *Staridola*, and probably Vodena itself, the commanding position that controls the western approaches to Thessalonike, where Theodore Angelos held sway from 1237-51.¹⁵ The Monastir gap was guarded by the fortresses of *Pelagonia* (Bitoli) and *Prilep*. The route through the Vardar valley was controlled by the fortress of *Prosek* (Prousakon) and passed north through *Veles* (Belessos) into the region of *Ovčepolje* (Neustropolis), to the south-west of Skoplje; and the approaches to Serres through the valley of the Strymon were guarded by the castle at *Melnik* (Melenikon) and more remotely by *Strumica* (Stroumnitz-Tiberiopolis) on the tributary of that name that joins the Struma or Strymon.¹⁶

The main routes through Epiros and Macedonia have always been determined by the geographical nature of the country and seem to have followed much the same course as now. The road from Arta to Ioannina led directly north to Berat, and thence along the coast to Durazzo. Near the point where it joins the valley of the Voiussa river, on the present Albanian frontier, a fork led to the north-east through Korytza and Devol to Ochrida. The *Via Egnatia* could be joined on the west either from Durazzo or from Sphenaritza, to the north of Avlona, and passed through Elbassan, Ochrida, Pelagonia,

and Vodena to Thessalonike. Arta was connected with Thessaly by a road over the mountains which led through Voulgareli and emerged at the pass of Porta, where stands the church of Porta Panagia, to the west of Trikkala. The precipitous road through Metzovon between Ioannina and Thessaly, practicable only in the summer months, seems also to have been used, and connected Epiros with the route through Grevena to Kastoria, Prespa, and Ochrida.

In Thessaly the central point of communication was *Larissa*, from which roads branched westwards towards Trikkala, and north, through *Servia*, over the borders of Macedonia to Kastoria on the west or *Berroia* on the east. This was the route followed by William of Villehardouin and his allies in 1259. The road from Larissa to Thessalonike seems to have followed the coast. The army of Boniface of Montferrat in 1205 came south to Larissa by way of *Kitros*, *Platamona*, and the vale of *Tempe*.¹⁷ At Lamia (Zetounion) to the south of Larissa there were two roads leading south, both of which passed over Thermopylai, the one branching east to Athens and Thebes, the other through *Gravia* and *Salona* (Amphissa) to the Gulf of Corinth. The defiles of Thermopylai were guarded by the strong castle of *Boudonitza* (now called Mendenitza); and the Frankish fortresses of Siderokastro, Gravia, and Salona controlled the only direct means of communication between the Morea and Thessalonike, which crossed from Vostitzia (or Aigion) to the port of *Vitrinitza* to the west of *Galaxidi*.¹⁸ The route from Epiros to the Morea, followed by Michael II on his visit to Patras in 1258, skirted the Ambracian Gulf, crossed the Acheloos river above *Vlekola* (Agrinion), and passed over the Gulf of Corinth by way of Naupaktos to Drepanon and Patras.¹⁹

For ecclesiastical purposes Thessaly was subordinate to the Metropolitan of Thessalonike. The Bishops of Berroia and Servia came directly under his jurisdiction. The Archbishop of Larissa was responsible for the towns of *Domoko* (Thaumakos), *Pharsala*, *Trikkala*, and *Stagoi*, or Kalabaka, which later assumed such importance with the foundation of the Meteora Monasteries. Other bishoprics of Thessaly were those of *Lamia*, *Neopatras* (Hypate), *Thermopylai*, *Gardiki* (to the east of Lamia), and *Demetrias* and *Velestino* on the Gulf of Volos.

¹ See signature to a document in Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *Bυζαντίον*, I (1909), p. 26. W. M. Leake, *Travels in Northern Greece*, vol. IV, pp. 5-6.

² See Apokaukos, ed. P. Kerameus, *loc. cit.*, p. 23; ed. Vasilievsky, p. 268. Ralles and Potles, *Σύνταγμα*, V, p. 170. See Tafel, *Symbolarum criticarum, geographiam byzantinam spectantium, partes duae*, II, p. 93.

³ Bellas was formerly identified with the ancient Photike, but this is now thought to lie to the north of Paramythia. See Leake, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 96-7. Hahn, *Albanesische Studien*, p. 115. Lambros in *Neos Hellenomenon*, II (1907), p. 295. Le Quien, *Oriens Christianus*, vol. II, pp. 143-4.

⁴ Le Quien, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 153-4. Leake, *op. cit.*, IV, p. 229. G. Sotiriou in *H περιφέρεια Χαροπίκα*, II (1927), p. 100, note 2.

⁵ Leake, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 75-7. H. Holland, *Travels in the Ionian Isles, Albania, Thessaly, Macedonia, etc.*, pp. 483-4.

⁶ Tafel, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 75-6, speaks of the 'town' of Vagenetia. But see Chronicle of the Morea 9162, and Chomatenos 441.

⁷ Leake, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 51-8. Holland, *op. cit.*, pp. 456-8. Meletios, *Γεωγραφία παλαιά τε καὶ νέα*, (Venice 1728), identifies Glyki with Aidonati, but mistakenly. See T. Smart Hughes, *Travels in Sicily, Greece, and Albania*, vol. II, p. 308. Chomatenos mentions the 'ἀρχοντεῖον Σοπωροῦ' in the Theme of Vagenetia (ed. Pitra, 193).

⁸ Tafel, *op. cit.*, II, p. 95. Thalloczy, *Illyrisch-Albanische Forschungen*, pp. 185-6.

⁹ Thalloczy, *op. cit.*, p. 174. See Leake, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 368-75. Holland, *op. cit.*, p. 511. The ancient Apollonia stood in this area. The district of Pogoniani at the southern end of Mount Nemertzka to the east of Argyrokastro is not mentioned by any of the writers or historians of the Despotate, although it was an important Archbishopric in the fourteenth century. See Le Quien, *Oriens Christianus*, II, pp. 93-4. D. M. Nicol, *The Churches of Molyvdoskepastos*, *Annual of the British School at Athens*, XLVIII (1954), pp. 152-3.

¹⁰ See H. Gelzer, *Der Patriarchat von Achrida*, p. 20. Jireček and Thalloczy in *Archiv für slavische Philologie*, 21 (1896), p. 78f.

¹¹ Gelzer, *op. cit.*, p. 16, and in *B.Z.*, II (1893), p. 41f.

¹² Chomatenos 565.

¹³ Tafel, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 37-8. Dassaretos in *Δελτίον*, V (1896), p. 132. Leake, I, p. 339, identifies Devol with the village of Svesde at the foot of Mount Xerouvouni to the north of Korytza. It was originally called Selasphorus. (See Le Quien, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 99-100). Chomatenos (321) refers to the Theme of Deavolis.

¹⁴ Tafel, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 38-9, places Koloneia 'inter Adrianopolin et Deabolin'. Leake, *op. cit.*, I, p. 342. The Theme of Koloneia is mentioned by Chomatenos (536).

¹⁵ Chomatenos 566. Leake identifies Staridola with the marshes of Sarigol, above the modern town of Kozani.

¹⁶ Chomatenos 55, 499, 536, 575. Tafel, *de Thessalonica eiusque agro Dissertation*, pp. 295-6, and *op. cit.*, I, pp. 48-9. Prilep and Veles were suffragan bishoprics of Strumica in the time of Chomatenos. See L. Petit in *Bulletin de l'Institut archéologique russe à Constantinople*, VI (1900), p. 96. Neustropolis is called Εὐτράπολις by Ephraim. See Petit, *op. cit.*, pp. 38 and 64 note.

¹⁷ Niketas Choniates 794, 799. Kitros and Platamona (Lykostomion) were both suffragan bishoprics of Thessalonike. See Le Quien, *op. cit.*, II, pp. 101-2.

¹⁸ A. Bon, *Forteresses médiévales de la Grèce centrale*, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, 61 (1937), pp. 148-63 (Boudonitza), pp. 164-86 (Salona), pp. 139-42. Chronicle of the Morea 889-94, and Longnon's edition, pp. cx-cxii.

¹⁹ Chronicle of the Morea 3480-520.

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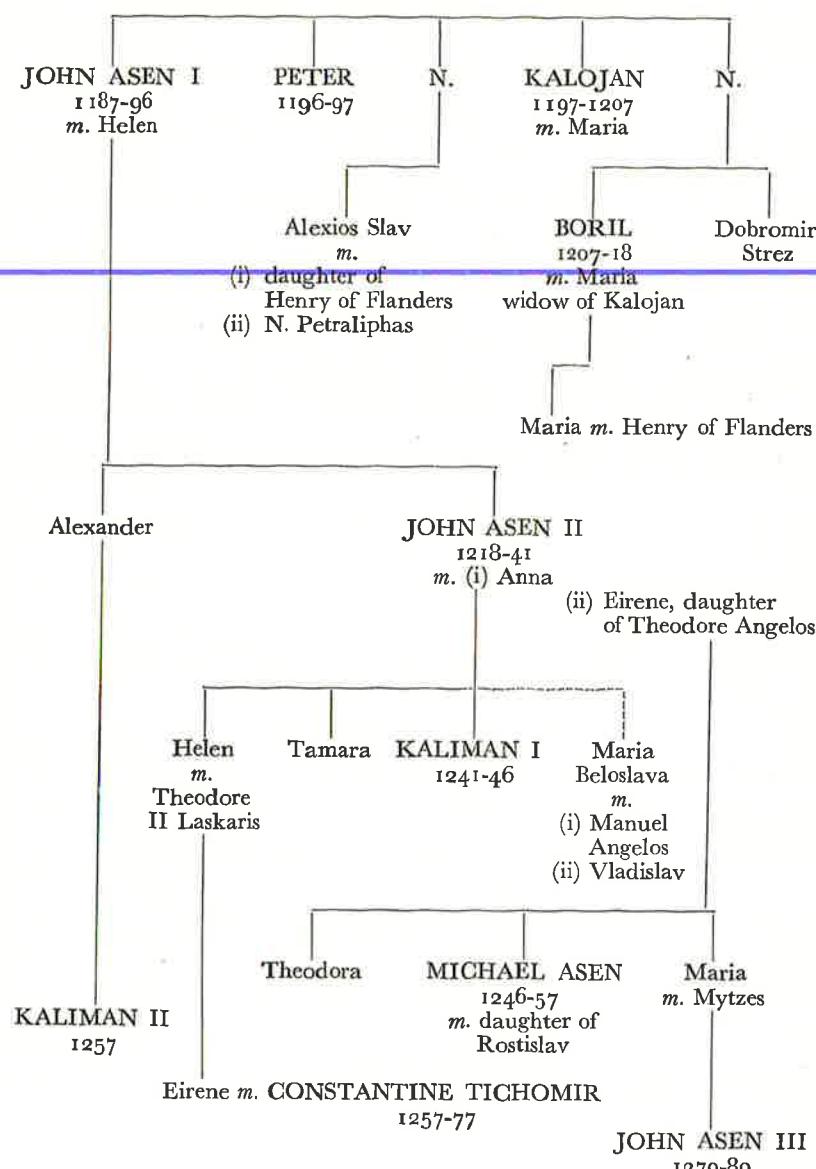
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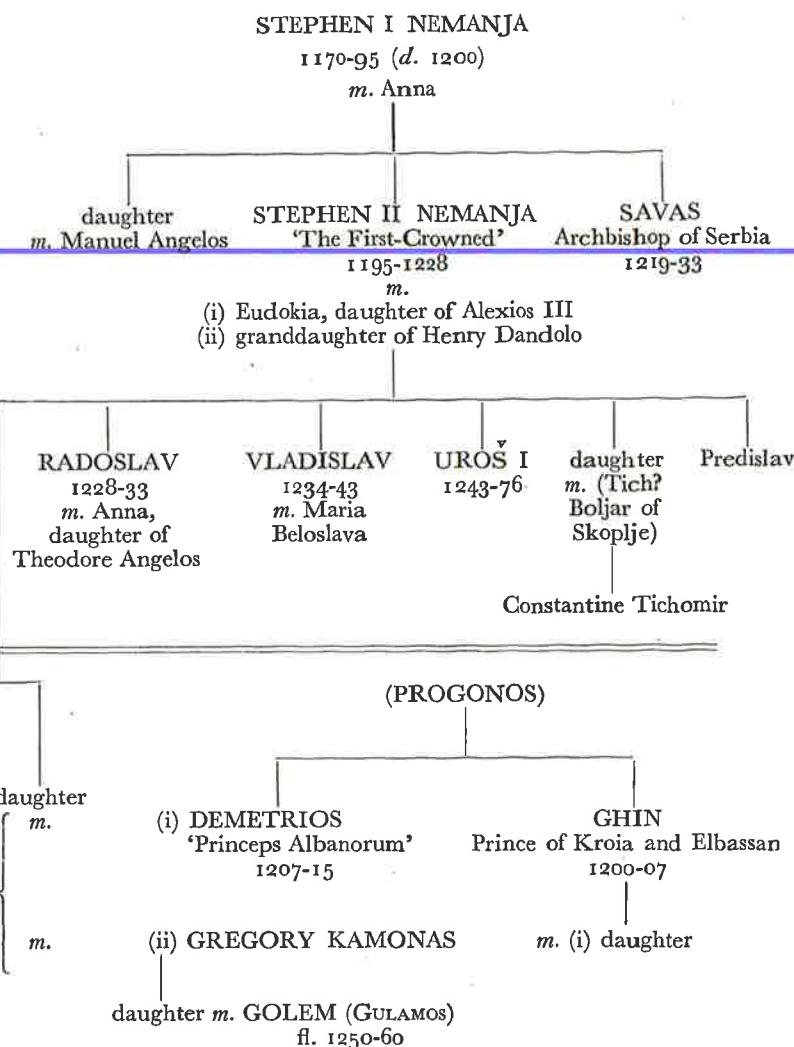
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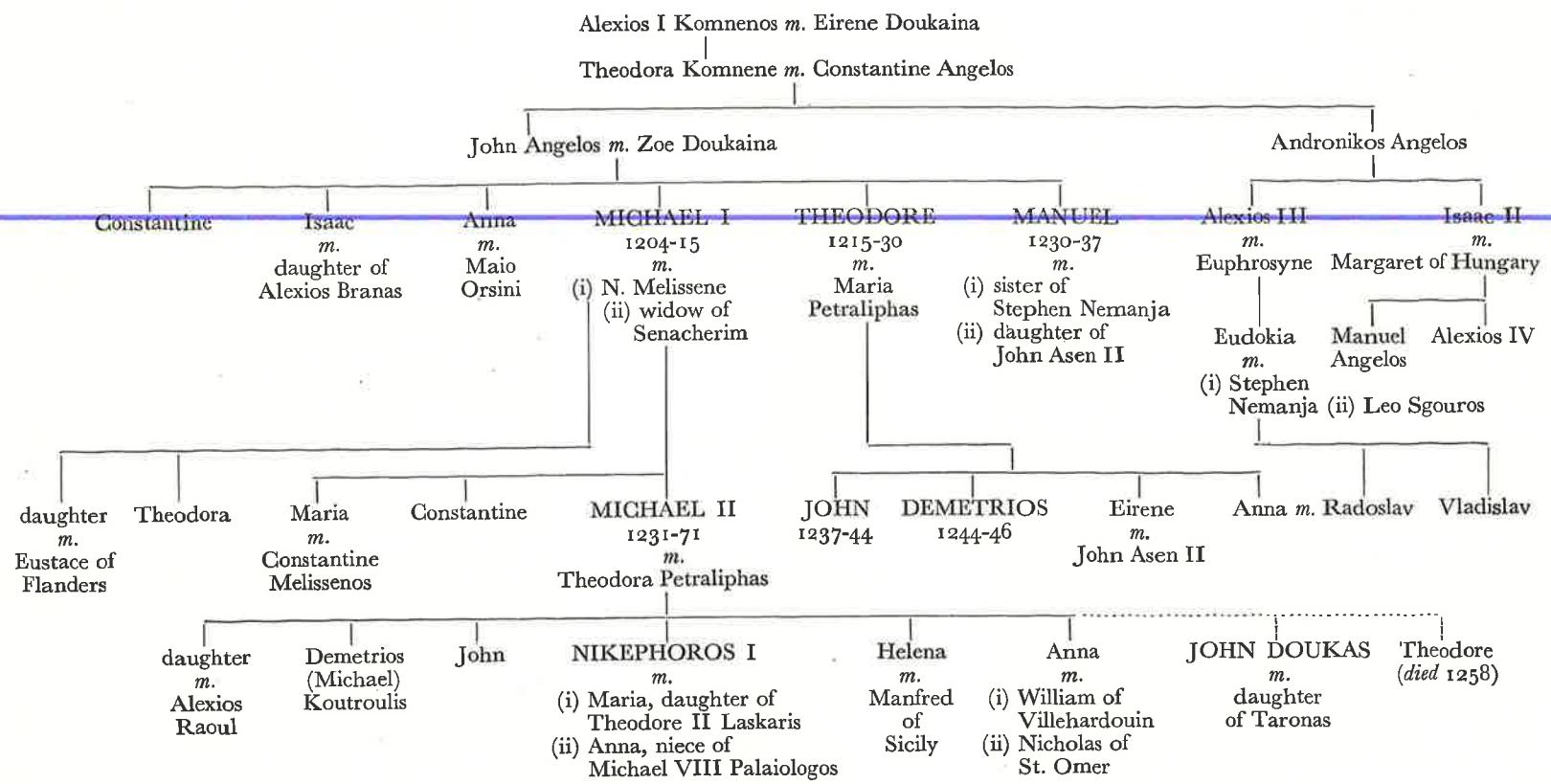
II. THE ASEN DYNASTY OF BULGARIA



III. ALBANIANS AND SERBIANS



I. DESPOTS OF EPIROS AND EMPERORS OF THESSALONIKE



INDEX

Achaia, 14, 25, 62, 125, 142, 173, 193
 Acheloos, 17, 31, 67, 102 n. 44, 221-3,
 225
 Acheron, river, 223
 Acre, 54
 Adrianople, 20, 89, 103-4, 108-10,
 113, 176, 179
 Adriatic, 8, 16, 17, 38, 48, 96, 159,
 160, 167
 Aegean islands, 8, 103
 Actos, 221
Agraphi, 133
 Aidonati (Paramythia), 223
 Aitolia, 8, 9, 16, 17, 34, 54, 57, 79,
 114, 129, 154, 222
 Akarnania, 8, 9, 16, 20, 42, 54, 67,
 114, 129, 132, 154, 222
 Akominatos, Michael, *see* Choniates,
 Michael
 Akrocorinth, 12, 13, 25
 Akrokeriaunia, 16, 222-3
 Akropolites, George, historian, 39,
 51, 69, 76-7, 109, 111, 114, 135,
 145, 148, 150, 152, 154, 160-5, 175,
 177, 180, 186, 187, 188, 190
Akrostichon, 143
 Albania, 17, 26, 30, 31, 42, 48, 111f.,
 148, 152f., 158f., 166, 177, 223
 Albanon, *see* Elbassan
 Alexander IV, Pope (1254-61), 167
 n. 9, 184 n. 13, 195 n. 4
 Alexandria, 86, 89
 Alifa, *see* Peter of, Robert of
 Amastris, 89, 92, 119
 Ambracia, Gulf of, 16, 19, 187, 222,
 225
 Amphilochia, 198
 Amphissa, *see* Salona
 Anagni, 61
 Anatoliko, 17, 31, 222
 Ancona, 53
 Andravida, 13, 106, 174
 Andrew, Metropolitan of Naupaktos,
 78, 99 n. 7
 Andrew, King of Hungary, 3, 52
 Andrew, subdeacon, 52
 Angelos, family and dynasty,
 Alexios III, Emperor (1195-
 1203), 1, 3, 4, 5, 7-11, 14-15,
 17, 54, 106, 204-5
 Alexios IV, Emperor (1203-04),
 3, 4, 5
 Anna, daughter of Alexios III,
 9
 Constantine, father of John Sebas-
 tokrator, 11
 Isaac II, Emperor (1185-95), 1,
 3-6, 8, 11, 38, 47, 133, 204, 215
 Manuel, son of Isaac II, 12
 Angelos Komnenos, family,
 Andronikos, son of Constantine
 Angelos, 11
 John, Sebastokrator, son of Con-
 stantine Angelos, 11, 71
 Angelos Komnenos Doukas, family
 and dynasty,
 Anna, daughter of John Sebas-
 tokrator, 11, 107, 115
 Anna, daughter of Theodore,
 60, 73 n. 34, 123
 Anna, daughter of Michael II,
 172-3, 183 n. 8
 Constantine, son of John Sebas-
 tokrator, 11, 15, 24, 47,
 54-7, 62, 65, 67, 72 n. 23, 79,
 114, 128-9, 135-7, 140 n. 12,
 199, 212 n. 14, 219
 Constantine, son of Michael I,
 24, 31, 43 n. 2
 Demetrios, son of Theodore,
 Despot of Thessalonike (1244-
 46), 141, 145-7, 208
 Demetrios (Koutroulis), son of
 Michael II, 154, 198

Eirene, daughter of Theodore, 134, 145-7
 Helena, daughter of Michael II, 171, 177-8, 183 n. 5 and 6
 Isaac, son of John Sebastokrator, 21 n. 10
 John, son of Theodore, Emperor of Thessalonike (1237-42), Despot (1242-44), 134, 136-9, 141, 206-7
 John, son of Michael II, 154, 192, 195 n. 11, 198
 John Doukas (Nothos), son of Michael II, 73 n. 27, 154, 172, 173, 178-9, 181, 186-9, 194, 196, 200, 212 n. 18
 Manuel, son of John Sebastokrator, Emperor and Despot of Thessalonike (1230-41), 11, 24, 47, 49, 67, 98, 104, 113-25, 125 n. 3, 128-9, 131-7, 144, 197, 198, 205, 206, 209
 Maria, daughter of Michael I, 47, 49, 142
 Michael I, son of John Sebastokrator, Despot of Epiros (1204-15), 11-21, 24-42, 47, 52, 68, 76-7, 79, 83, 88, 106, 133, 196, 204, 209
 Michael II, son of Michael I, Despot of Epiros (1231-67), 42, 43 n. 2, 47, 111, 114, 128-34, 136-7, 139, 141-4, 148-55, 157-67, 169-82, 186-90, 192-4, 196-8, 200-1, 203-4, 208-12, 216, 225
 Nikephoros, son of Michael II, Despot of Epiros, 149, 153-4, 159-60, 172-3, 179, 181, 186-9, 193-4, 195 n. 13, 196, 198, 201, 203, 209, 210
 Theodora, daughter of Michael I, 47, 49
 Theodore, son of John Sebastokrator, Despot of Epiros (1215-30) and Emperor of Thessalonike (1225-30), 11, 24-5, 39, 43, 47-71, 76-99, 103-11, 113-15, 118, 123, 128-9, 133-9, 142, 144-6, 148, 150-3, 154, 157, 170, 191, 194, 196-7, 204-6, 208, 210, 215, 220, 224
 Theodore, son of Michael II, 154, 164, 172
 Ankyra, 119, 120
 Anseau of Cahieu, 105
 Anseau of Toucy, 178, 182, 189
 Antibari, Archbishop of, 156 n. 13
 Antioch, 86, 89, 216
 Apokaukos, George, Dux of Thessalonike (c. 1235), 114
 Apokaukos, John, Metropolitan of Naupaktos (c. 1200-33), 41, 54-9, 64-7, 70, 77-80, 82-91, 93, 97-9, 106, 112 n. 8, 117, 121, 132, 197, 217-21, 222-3
 Apulia, 109
 Arachthos, river, 197
 Argos, Argolid, 10, 12, 13, 14, 25
 Argyrokastro, 223
 Arsenios, Bishop of Demetrias (1215), 41
 Arsenios, Patriarch of Nicaea (1255-60: 1261-67), 160, 167 n. 2, 169, 174, 195 n. 4
 Arta, 15f., 31, 34f., 42, 56, 65f., 70, 83-4, 91, 97, 114, 121, 128-9, 132, 142, 149, 154, 165, 174, 178, 186f., 194f., 200-4, 208-9, 210, 219, 222, 224-5
 Asen, family and dynasty of Bulgaria, Joannitius, *see* Kalojan
 John I (1187-96), 1, 11, 20
 John II (1218-41), 98, 103-5, 108, 110-11, 113-15, 117-18, 121, 123-4, 133-4, 136-7, 145, 148, 191, 205-6
 Helen, daughter of John II, 108, 123-4
 Michael, son of John II (1246-57), 145-6, 158, 162, 169
 Peter (1196-97), 1, 11, 20
 Astakos, 222
 Athens, 10, 12, 13, 17, 28, 43, 63, 64, 69, 78, 82-4, 116, 142, 172, 174, 178-9, 193, 225
 Athos, Mount, 81, 94, 117-18, 123-4
 Attalia, 135
 Attika, 9, 10, 35
 Autremoncourt, *see* Thomas de

Avlenos, Constantine, Patriarchal Legate, 88, 90
 Avlona, 18, 154, 166, 177-8, 223-4
 Axeios, *see* Vardar
 Baldwin I, Count of Flanders, Latin Emperor of Constantinople (1204-05), 4-8, 11, 20, 21, 51
 Baldwin II, Latin Emperor of Constantinople (1228-61), 107-8, 123, 137, 144, 157, 166, 191, 193
 Bardanes, George, Metropolitan of Corfu (1219-35), 38-9, 66, 70, 80, 82-3, 84, 88, 91, 95-7, 106, 115-21, 142
 Basil II, Emperor (976-1025), 81, 224
 Basil, Archbishop of Tirnovo, 117
 Basil Kamateros, Patriarch of Constantinople (1183-87), 78
 Beatrice of Savoy, first wife of Manfred of Sicily, 171
 Bellas, 56, 67, 102 n. 44, 197, 221-2
 Bellegrada, Bellagrada, *see* Berat
 Beloslava, Maria, daughter of John Asen II, 104, 114, 134, 135, 206
 Benedict, Archbishop of Cephalonia (1228), 112 n. 8
 Benevento, Battle of, 193
 Berat (Bellegrada), 42, 166, 177-8, 186, 188, 222-4
 Berislavos, Michael, *chartularios* of Thessalonike, 74 n. 52
 Berroia, 58-9, 67-8, 148, 151, 160, 163-4, 173, 225
 Berthold of Katzenellenbogen, Count of Velestino, 29, 34, 36-7, 49, 54, 142, 155 n. 3
 Bithynia, 21, 93, 121, 160
 Bitoli, *see* Pelagonia
 Bize, 105, 149
 Blemmydes, Nikephoros, 91, 167 n. 2, 169
 Bohemond, son of Robert Guiscard, 215
 Boiotia, 9, 10, 35
 Bonditza, *see* Vonitza
 Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat, King of Thessalonike (1204-07), 3-8, 10, 11, 13, 20, 21, 27, 35-6, 206, 225
 Boril, King of Bulgaria (1207-18), 33-4, 37, 43, 48, 103
 Boudonitsa, 27, 35, 44 n. 7, 57, 62-4, 142, 174, 178, 225
 Bouthroton, *see* Butrinto
 Branas, family of, 11
 Brindisi, 50, 61-3, 106, 115
 Brusa, 9
 Brysis, 105
 Buffa, Amadeo, Constable of the Latin Empire, 33, 36
 Bulgaria, 1, 11, 20, 21, 43, 49f., 54f., 59, 76, 80-2, 85, 92, 94, 97, 103, 105, 108f., 113f., 117f., 121f., 128, 132, 134, 137, 145, 148, 150, 154, 157, 169, 176, 190, 205, 223-4
 Butrinto (Bouthroton), 56, 132, 167, 220, 221-3
 Caiazzo, 215
 Capua, 215
 Carinthia, Duke of, 176, 179, 182
 Casole, Monastery of, near Otranto, 116, 125 n. 5
 Castrenses, 133
 Cephalonia (Kephallenia), 10, 17, 19, 38, 107, 115, 187-8, 215
 Cernik (Cernikum), 31, 223
 Chabaron, Constantine, governor of Elbassan (1256-57), 160-2, 175
 Chalkoutzes, Metropolitan of Durazzo (c. 1257), 168 n. 11
 Charles I of Anjou, King of Naples and Sicily (1265-83), 193-4
 Chimarra, 167, 222
 Chinardo, Philip, admiral of Manfred of Sicily (1257-66), 167-8, 168 n. 19, 171, 193
 Chomatenos, Demetrios, Archbishop of Ochrida (1217-35), 16, 49, 55, 59, 60, 65-8, 70, 77, 80-2, 84-5, 87-9, 91-4, 97-9, 117, 118, 120-2, 126 n. 19, 168 n. 10, 194, 221-2
 Choniates, George, *protovestiarites* of Manuel Angelos, 100 n. 8, 114, 125 n. 4
 Choniates, Michael Akominatos, Metropolitan of Athens (1175-22), 10, 12, 56, 69, 78, 82-4, 114, 116
 Choniates, Niketas, Metropolitan of

Naupaktos (c. 1231), 100 n. 8, 118-19, 132, 221
 Chounabia, 161
 Christopher, Bishop of Ankyra, Patriarchal legate (1232-33), 117, 119-22, 132, 221
 Christoupolis, *see* Kavalla
 Churches and Monasteries,
 Blachernai monastery, Arta, 197-9, 202, 210, 216 n. 11
 Chilandari monastery, Athos, 155 n. 1
 Dochiariou monastery, Athos, 214 n. 60
 Hilarion monastery, Halmyros, 142, 155 n. 3
 Iviron monastery, Athos, 81
 Kato Panagia monastery, Arta, 131, 200-1
 Kostaniani, near Dodona, church at, 212 n. 15
 Marmariana monastery, Larissa, 155 n. 3
 Molyvoskepastos, churches at, 212 n. 15
 Panagia Bellas, Voulgareli, 203, 210
 Panagia of Bryoni, Arta, 198-9
 Panagia Makrinitissa, Makrinitsa, 37, 142, 155 n. 3
 Panagia Speleotissa, Melnik, 73 n. 29
 Pantokrator, Ioannina, 211 n. 2
 Paregoritissa, Arta, 203
 Peribleptos monastery, Arta, 211 n. 1, 220
 Porta Panagia, Trikkala, 200, 203, 212 n. 15, 213 n. 22, 225
 St. Demetrios Katsouri, Arta, 199, 220
 St. George, Arta, 198, 201-3
 St. John the Forerunner, Arta, 72 n. 23, 199, 212 n. 14, 220
 St. Luke monastery, Stiris, 77-8, 221
 St. Nicholas, Prenista, 140 n. 4
 St. Nicholas Rodiàs, Arta, 212 n. 14
 St. Paul monastery, Athos, 214 n. 60

St. Sophia, Constantinople, 5, 7, 78
 St. Theodora, Arta, *see* St. George
 Taxiarchs of the Metropolis, Kastoria, 202
 Transfiguration, Galaxidi, 131, 200
 Varnakova, monastery at, 72 n. 23.
 Vatopedi monastery, Athos, 210-11
 Xenophontos monastery, Athos, 112 n. 6
 Colloneia, *see* Kolonia
 Colonna, John, Cardinal, 50-3, 60-1
 Conon of Béthune, regent of Constantinople (1219-21), 28, 60, 112 n. 11
 Conrad IV of Hohenstaufen, King of Germany (1250-54), 166-7
 Conradin of Hohenstaufen, King of Germany (1254-68), 166, 171
 Constance (Anna) of Hohenstaufen, daughter of Frederick II, wife of John III Vatatzes, 144, 171, 175, 184 n. 13, 192
 Constantine, St., 205
 Constantine, Bishop of Arta (1222), 212 n. 14, 219
 Constantine, Bishop of Kastoria (c. 1220), 77
 Constantinople, 2-11, 16, 20, 24, 30, 37, 39, 40, 43, 48, 50f., 54, 58, 60, 63f., 76f., 82-3, 86, 91, 93-4, 103-5, 108-10, 113, 116, 124-5, 137, 149, 151, 154, 170, 173, 175, 186, 189, 190-3, 196, 198-9, 208, 211, 215
 Corinth, 9, 10, 14, 16, 25, 34, 222, 225
 Corfu (Kerkyra), 9, 10, 17-19, 26-7, 30-1, 37-9, 42, 56, 77, 80, 82-4, 88, 97, 106-7, 114-15, 121, 132-3, 142-3, 154, 167, 193-4, 196, 203-4, 210, 222-3
 Cotrone (Croton), 52, 53
 Counalis, Symeon, Epirote ambassador to Venice, 31, 44 n. 18
 Cumans, 110, 138, 160, 176, 179, 180-2
 Cyclades islands, 8
 Cyrus, 192

Dandolo, Henry, Doge of Venice, 3, 4-6, 7, 18, 21
 Daphnusia, island, 190
 Demetrias, 35, 37, 41, 135, 155 n. 3, 225
 Demetrios of Montferrat, King of Thessalonike (1207-27), 27, 29, 49-50, 54, 61-4, 107, 136
 Demetrios, 'Princeps Albanorum' (1207-15), 26-7, 38, 43 n. 5, 48
 Demetrios, Bishop of Butrinto, 56
 Demetrios, St., 21, 58, 94, 205-9
 Devol (Deabolis), 111, 125 n. 1, 152-3, 177, 224
 Dibra (Devrai), 59, 158, 161-2, 224
 Didymoteichos (Demotika), 47, 104, 113, 215
 Disypatos, Manuel, Bishop of Thessalonike, 124
 Dokeianos, Metropolitan of Durazzo (1213-24), 40, 88
 Domoko (Thaumakos), 35-6, 41, 125 n. 3, 225
 Doukas, family,
 Alexios V, Mourtzouphlos, Emperor (1204), 5, 6, 9
 Zoe, wife of John Angelos Komnenos Sebastokrator, 11
 Dragomesti, 220-2
 Dragotas, Bulgarian governor of Serres, 145, 158
 Drama, 33, 58, 145
 Drepanon, 174, 225
 Drin, river, 222
 Dryinopolis, 219, 220, 222-3
 DuCange, C. du Fresne, historian, 54
 Durazzo (Dyrrachion), 17-19, 26-7, 30f., 37-43, 50f., 56, 59, 68, 71, 79, 83, 88, 90, 93-6, 107, 113f., 123, 148, 150, 153-4, 159-62, 166-7, 186, 188, 196, 215, 222-4
 Edessa, *see* Vodena
 Egypt, 3, 4
 Elassona, 59, 179
 Elbassan (Albanon), 17, 26, 48-9, 51, 152, 160-3, 223-4
 Eleutherochori, 179
 Embriago, Nicholas, Genoese ambassador to Epiros, 131
 England, 3
 Ephesos, 77
 Ergene (Regina), river, 158
 Ernoul, historian, 51
 Eski-Delik gateway, Thessalonike, 197
 Euboea, 28, 41, 62, 82, 136, 172-4, 178
 Eudokia, wife of Stephen II Nemanja, 26
 Euphrosyne, wife of Alexios III, 15, 35
 Eustace of Flanders, regent of Thessalonike (1207-16), 29, 34, 47, 49, 54, 155 n. 3
 Eustathios, Bishop of Acheloos, 102 n. 44
 Exocastri, 133
 Faik-Bey, mosque, Arta, 199
 Ferentino, 61
 Fossa Nova, Chronicle of, 51
 France, 3
 Franciscans, 116, 126 n. 8
 Frederick I Barbarossa, of Hohenstaufen, German Emperor, 2, 11
 Frederick II, of Hohenstaufen, German Emperor and King of Sicily (1198-1250), 50, 61-2, 64, 106-7, 108-9, 115-16, 136, 144, 149, 150, 166
 'Freemen', of Corfu, 143
 Galata, 189
 Galatia, 119
 Galaxidi, 35, 131, 200, 201, 225
 Galaxidi, Chronicle of, 44 n. 22, 128, 200
 Gallipoli, 103, 123
 Gangrene, mistress of Michael II Despot, 129-31, 154
 Gardichio, 42
 Gardiki, 225
 Genoa, Genoese, 2, 9, 18, 37, 131, 190
 Geoffrey of Bruyères, Baron of Karytaina, 178, 181-2
 Geoffrey I of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia (1210-18), 13, 14, 25, 62
 Geoffrey II of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia (1218-46), 124-5, 136, 142
 George, St., 206

George Xiphilinos, Patriarch of Constantinople (1191-99), 78
 Georgians, 81
 Germanos II, Patriarch of Nicaea (1222-40), 78, 91, 92-8, 118-20, 122, 123-4, 132, 199
 Germany, Germans, 2, 4, 106, 176, 178-9, 181-2, 207-8
 Ghin, son of Progonos, Albanian chief, 17, 26, 48
 Glabas, Epirote general, 151-2
 Glavinitza (Glavernica), 18, 31, 223
 Glyky, 18, 223
 Golem (Gulamos), Albanian prince of Kroia and Elbassan (1200-07), 152-3, 156 n. 13, 161-2
 Gorianites, Nicholas, Dux of Achelous (c. 1215-25), 55, 67, 72 n. 19, 91
 Gorianites, Bishop of Serres (1221), 73 n. 28, 90
 Grassos, John, notary of Otranto, 116
 Gratziana (Gratianopolis), 104
 Gravia, 35, 179, 225
 Gregoras, Nikephoros, historian, 16, 69, 76, 111
 Gregory IX, Pope (1227-41), 107, 115, 116
 Gregory, Bishop of Philippopolis and Tirnovo (1232), 118
 Grevena, 59, 83, 225
 Guérin (Warinus), Archbishop of Thessalonike (1222), 61
 Guiscard, Robert, Duke of Apulia, 215
 Guy I de la Roche, Duke of Athens (1225-63), 172, 174
 Hadrianopolis, 223
 Halmyros, 35, 37, 63, 98, 105, 142
 Hannibal, 192
 Hebros, river, *see* Maritza
 Hellas, Theme of, 9, 10, 12
 Hellespont, 138, 151, 189
 Henry VI, of Hohenstaufen, German Emperor, 2
 Henry of Flanders, Latin Emperor of Constantinople (1206-16), 4, 20, 21, 27-31, 34, 36-7, 39, 43, 47-50, 60, 61, 76
 Henry of Valenciennes, historian, 28

Honorius III, Pope (1216-27), 49, 50, 52-3, 58, 61-3
 Hubert, Count of Biandrate, 27, 61-2
 Hungary, Hungarians, 3-4, 6-7, 52, 176, 179, 182
 Hypate, *see* Neopatras
 Iasites, Bishop of Ephesus, 77
 Ierissos, 118, 123
 Innocent III, Pope (1198-1216), 3, 19, 25-7, 32-3, 36, 38-9, 41, 117
 Innocent IV, Pope (1243-54), 156 n. 13
 Ioannina, 16, 17, 31, 42, 56, 78, 85, 106, 121, 178, 186-9, 193, 196-7, 220-2, 224-5
 Ionian islands, 8, 9, 17
 Ises, *protostrator* of Nicaea, 103-4
 Ismi, river, 223
 Istronopolis (Dryinopolis), 31
 Itea, 35, 200
 Ithaka, 10, 19, 115
 Jerusalem, 3, 86, 89, 108-9
 Jews, 37
 Joannitius, *see* Kalojan
 Joannitius, Archbishop of Ochrida (after 1235), 168 n. 10
 Job, monk and chronicler, 128-9, 200-2
 John, Bishop of Arta (1223-30?), 199, 219-21
 John, Bishop of Vonitza (1227), 102 n. 44
 John of Brienne, King of Jerusalem, Emperor-regent of Constantinople (1228-37), 108-9, 113, 116, 124, 131, 134
 John Kamateros, Patriarch of Constantinople (1199-1206), 23 n. 28, 76, 78
 Joseph, Metropolitan of Thessalonike (?1225-32), 118, 126 n. 13
 Justinian, Emperor, 65, 81, 93
 Justiniana Prima, 80-2
 Kabasilas, Constantine, Metropolitan of Durazzo (1224-46), Archbishop of Ochrida (1246-56; 1258), 93, 101 n. 36, 102 n. 44, 161, 168 n. 10, 177

Kabasilas, Demetrios, of Durazzo, 168 n. 10
 Kabasilas, John, 161
 Kabasilas, Theodore, 161
 Kake Petra, 161
 Kalambakes, Theodore, Nicene general, 160
 Kalamis (Thyamis), river, 222
 Kaliman I, King of Bulgaria (1241-46), 137, 145
 Kaliman II, King of Bulgaria (1257), 169
 Kalojoannes, of Corfu, 140 n. 9
 Kalojan, King of Bulgaria (1197-1207), 1, 20, 21, 33, 81, 85, 103, 108
 Kalospites, Bishop of Larissa (1212-c. 1225), 40, 86-9
 Kamarina, 223
 Kamateros, *see* Basil, John
 Kamonias, Gregory, prince of Kroia, 48-9, 156 n. 13
 Kampanos, of Thessalonike, 146-7
 Kamytzes, John, Nicene general, 103-4
 Kanina, 167, 177, 193, 223
 Kapsikia, 14
 Karydi, 172, 183 n. 7
 Karystos, 82
 Karytaina, 178
 Kassiopiea, 223
 Kastoria, 59, 151, 152-3, 161, 163, 176-7, 180, 186, 202, 224-5
 Katakolon, 179
 Kavalla (Christoupolis), 7, 104, 138, 145
 Keos, 78, 83
 Kerkyra, *see* Corfu
 Khaikosrau, Seljuk Sultan, 144
 Kičevo (Kitzavis), 161, 163, 224
 Kiev, 158
 Kitros, 225
 Klokotnitza, 110, 111, 112 n. 14, 113, 194
 Koloneia, Kolone, 31, 224
 Komnenos, family and dynasty, Alexios I, Emperor (1081-1118), 1, 11, 54, 56, 215
 Alexios II, Emperor (1180-83), 2, 106
 Andronikos I, Emperor (1183-85), 2
 David, Emperor of Trebizond, 89
 John II, Emperor (1118-43), 1
 Manuel I, Emperor (1143-80), 1, 2, 7, 31, 106, 143, 203, 215
 Theodora, daughter of Alexios I, 11
 Komotini, 104
 Konia (Iconium), 15, 139
 Konitza, 222
 Kontophre, Manuel, Nicene general, 138
 Korytza (Kourestos), 224
 Kostaniani, 212, n. 15
 Kostomeres, Bishop of Neopatras (1218), 73 n. 25, 84, 89-90
 Koundoura, 14, 25
 Kozani, 59
 Kozyle, 121, 221-3
 Kroia, 17, 26, 48-9, 67, 152-3, 156 n. 13, 158, 161, 223
 Kyparissia, 14
 Lakedaimonia, 14
 Lamari, 222
 Lamia (Zetounion), 12, 35-6, 57, 179, 225
 Lambardas, Manuel, Nicene general, 164
 Lambetis (Constantine?), Epirote noble, 152, 156 n. 14
 Lampsakos, 123, 182, 188-9
 Larissa, 10, 12, 27, 35-7, 40-3, 58, 66, 79, 83, 86-90, 135, 148, 179, 225
 Laskaris, family and dynasty of Nicaea, Eirene, daughter of Theodore II, 169
 Eirene, wife of John III Vatatzes, 152
 Eudokia, daughter of Theodore I, 60, 105
 John IV, Emperor (1258-61), 170, 173-5, 191
 Maria, daughter of John III Vatatzes, 149, 160
 Michael, uncle of John III Vatatzes, 146, 160, 162-4, 170

Theodore I, Emperor (1204-22), 9, 15, 21, 24, 31, 37, 40, 43, 47-8, 60-1, 64, 76, 86, 91, 95-6, 105, 216
 Theodore II, Emperor (1254-58), 123, 158-63, 169-70, 171, 173
 Lateran, Council of (1215), 38, 44 n. 25, 77
 Lechonia (Liconia), 173
 Lentza, 159
 Leukas, 9, 17, 19, 40, 42, 88, 90, 97, 102 n. 44, 187, 223
 Levadia, 187
 Loidoriki, 189
 Lombards, 3, 12f., 17, 27-8, 31, 35f., 43, 58, 61
 Macedonia, 8, 20, 42, 47, 50, 54, 57-9, 63, 66, 81, 104-5, 129, 138, 145-6, 151f., 158f., 166, 169f., 172-9, 186, 190, 198, 215, 224
 Makri, 104
 Makrinitza, 37, 142
 Mala Prespa, Lake, 224
 Malik, Lake, 152
 Manasses, Constantine, historian, Metropolitan of Naupaktos, 77-8
 Manfred, of Hohenstaufen, King of Sicily (1257-66), 166-7, 170-1, 174-5, 177-8, 181-2, 188, 190, 192-4
 Manfred, Archbishop of Durazzo (1209), 26
 Mangaphas, Theodore, of Philadelphia, 15
 Manuel I Sarantenos, Patriarch of Nicaea (1215-22), 40-1, 77, 83, 86, 87-91
 Manuel Makros, Bishop of Bellas (1229), 102 n. 44
 Margaret (Maria) of Hungary, wife of Boniface of Montferrat, Dowager Queen of Thessalonike, 6, 7, 11, 27, 49, 54, 62
 Margaritone of Brindisi, 10
 Maria of Courtenay, wife of Theodore I Laskaris, 86-7, 107
 Maritza (Hebros), river, 104, 110, 111, 145, 158-9
 Marmora, Andrea, historian, 42
 Marmora, Sea of, 189
 Mat, river, 161, 223
 Megara, 27, 172
 Meglen (Moglena), 59, 224
 Meliarakes, Antonios, historian, 54
 Melissenos, Alexios, 21 n. 10
 Melissenos, Constantine, 35, 37, 135, 141-2, 152, 155 n. 3, 195 n. 3
 Melissenos, Nicholas, 155 n. 3, 195 n. 13
 Melissenos, family, 11, 15, 35
 Melnik (Melenikon), 33, 59, 104, 113, 145-6, 148, 158, 216, 224
 Menelaus, 173
 Mesopotamites, Constantine, Metropolitan of Thessalonike (1224-25), 65, 74 n. 45, 95
 Messenia, 13, 14
 Meteora monasteries, 225
 Meteorion, 191
 Metzovon, 225
 Michael IV Autoreianos, Patriarch of Nicaea (1206-12), 40-1
 Michael, St., 204-8
 Minotto, Marco, 106
 Mistra, 173, 203
 Modon, 14
 Mokros, 224
 Molyskos, 177, 181
 Molyvoskepastos, 212 n. 15
 Monasteries, *see* Churches
 Monastir, 145, 152, 161, 224
 Monemvasia, 14, 25
 Mongols, 138-9, 144, 158
 Montferrat, *see* Boniface, Demetrios, William of
 Morea, 13f., 16f., 24-5, 35, 47, 52, 63, 103, 107, 124, 128, 136, 172-6, 178, 225
 Morosini, Jacopo, Venetian admiral, 18, 19
 Morosini, Thomas, Latin Patriarch of Constantinople, 18
 Mosynopolis, 7, 8, 104
 Mourtzophlos, Alexios, *see* Doukas
 Mouskes, Philip, chronicler, 51, 131
 Muzalon, George, regent of Nicaea (1258), 158, 170
 Mykari, Nikephoros, governor of Bellas, 67
 Mytzes, Bulgarian ruler, 183 n. 2

Naples, 38
 Narjot of Toucy, 108, 112 n. 11
 Naupaktos, 16, 31, 34-5, 42-3, 54-7, 59, 77-8, 106, 118-19, 132, 174, 178, 189, 199, 219-22, 225
 Nauplion, 13, 14, 25
 Nektarios, Abbot of Casole monastery, 116
 Nemanja, Stephen I, of Serbia (1170-95), 1
 Nemanja, Stephen II, King of Serbia (1195-1228), 26, 33, 38, 48-9, 60, 94, 122
 Neocaesarea, 89
 Neopatras (Hypate), 35-6, 57-9, 84, 89, 155, 179, 187, 189, 194, 225
 Neophytos, Bishop of Ierissos (1235), 126 n. 13
 Neretum (Nardo), 126 n. 8
 Nestongos, Isaac, Nicene general, 162, 165
 Neustropolis, *see* Ovçepolje
 Nicaea, 9f., 15, 21, 24, 38f., 43, 48f., 54, 60-1, 64f., 68-9, 76-99, 103f., 109f., 114, 116-25, 128, 131-9, 141, 143-53, 157-61, 163-4, 166-7, 169-76, 180, 186-7, 190, 194, 208, 215-16, 221
 Nicholas, governor of Otranto, 116
 Nicholas of Mainvault, 63
 Nicholas of St. Omer, Lord of Gravia, 35
 Nikephoros III, Emperor (1078-81), 205
 Nikephoros, Patriarch of Nicaea (1260), 195 n. 4
 Niketas, Metropolitan of Thessalonike (1260), 195 n. 4
 Nikomedia, 105
 Nikopolis, Theme of, 9-11, 15, 17, 31, 222-3
 Normans, 2, 10, 15, 166, 215
 Nymphaion, 157, 158
 Ochrida, 16, 48-9, 51, 54, 56, 59-60, 65, 67, 77, 80-2, 84, 89, 93-4, 111, 121, 148, 152-3, 161-2, 165, 177, 179, 180, 186, 223-5
 Orsini, Maio, Count of Cephalonia (1194-1260?), 10, 19, 26, 38, 107, 109, 115, 127 n. 24, 155 n. 3, 187-8, 215
 Orsini, Richard, son of Maio, Count of Cephalonia, 195 n. 2
 Orvieto, Bishop of, 160
 Ostrovo, 136, 151, 186, 224
 Osum, river, 224
 Otranto, 115-16
 Otto de la Roche, Duke of Athens (1205-25), 12, 25, 62
 Otto, Duke of Brunswick, 3
 Ovçepolje (Neustropolis), 145, 224
 Palaiokastritzia, Corfu, 42
 Palaiologos, family and dynasty, Andronikos, father of Michael VIII, 138, 145, 148
 Andronikos II, Emperor (1282-1328), 45 n. 35, 206
 Anna, daughter of Eulogia, second wife of Nikephoros of Epiros, 193
 Eulogia, sister of Michael VIII, 193
 John, brother of Michael VIII, 173, 176-7, 179-80, 182, 186-90, 192
 Michael VIII, Emperor (1261-82), 148, 151, 153, 160, 163-6, 169-75, 180, 182, 188-93, 198, 206, 211
 Paphlagonians, 160, 164
 Parnassos, mountain, 35
 Partition Treaty, 7-8, 17, 18, 30, 35, 174
 Patras, 13, 173-4, 225
 Pediadites, Alexios, archon of Durazzo (1223), 68
 Pediadites, Basil, Metropolitan of Corfu (1204-19), 38, 77, 80, 82, 85, 142
 Pediadites, George, archon of Berroia (c. 1225), 68
 Pegai, 149-50
 Peganites, Alexios, governor of Thessalonike (c. 1230), 114
 Peganites, Constantine, governor of Berroia (c. 1220), 59, 67
 Pelagi, Cardinal, 83, 116
 Pelagonia, 34, 48-9, 56, 59, 111, 145, 148, 161-4, 177, 179, 187, 224

Pelagonia, Battle of, 180-82, 185
nn. 22 and 23, 186, 188, 194
Pelavicino, Guy, Marquis of Boudinica, 27, 35, 62
Pelavicino, Hubert, Marquis of Boudinica, 155 n. 2
Pelion, mountain, 37, 142
Peloponnes (see also Morea), 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 24
Perugia, 124
Peter of Alifa, 215-16
Peter of Courtenay, Latin Emperor of Constantinople (1217), 50-3, 69, 98
Peter of Douai, 28
Petaliphas, family, 215-16
 Alexios, 215
 Andronikos, 216
 John, Sebastokrator, 47, 67, 129, 138, 215
 Maria, wife of Theodore Angelos, Empress of Thessalonike, 47, 59, 66-7, 129, 142, 155 n. 3, 212 n. 5, 215
 Maria, wife of Sphrantzes, 162, 168 n. 12, 193, 215
 Nikephoros, 215
 Nikephoros Komnenos, 216
 Theodore, son of John, 67, 151-2, 165, 176, 215
 Theodora (St.), wife of Michael II of Epiros, 128-31, 149-50, 154, 159-60, 187, 192, 198, 200-3, 210, 215
 Theodora, of Antioch, 216
Pharsala, 35-6, 97, 102 n. 44, 135, 225
Philadelphia, 9, 15, 211
Philes, Theodore, of Nicaea, 175, 184 n. 12
Philip, of Hohenstaufen, Duke of Swabia, 2, 3, 4
Philippi, 145, 153
Philippopolis, 110
Photike-Bellas, 222
Phrangopoulos, George, Dux of Thessalonike, 71 n. 8
Pindos, mountains, 8-10, 16, 17, 31, 36, 177, 179, 186
Pisa, Pisans, 2, 37
Platamona, 58-9, 135, 148, 182, 225
Plytos, John, governor of Kroia, Ochrida, Berroia, 48, 67

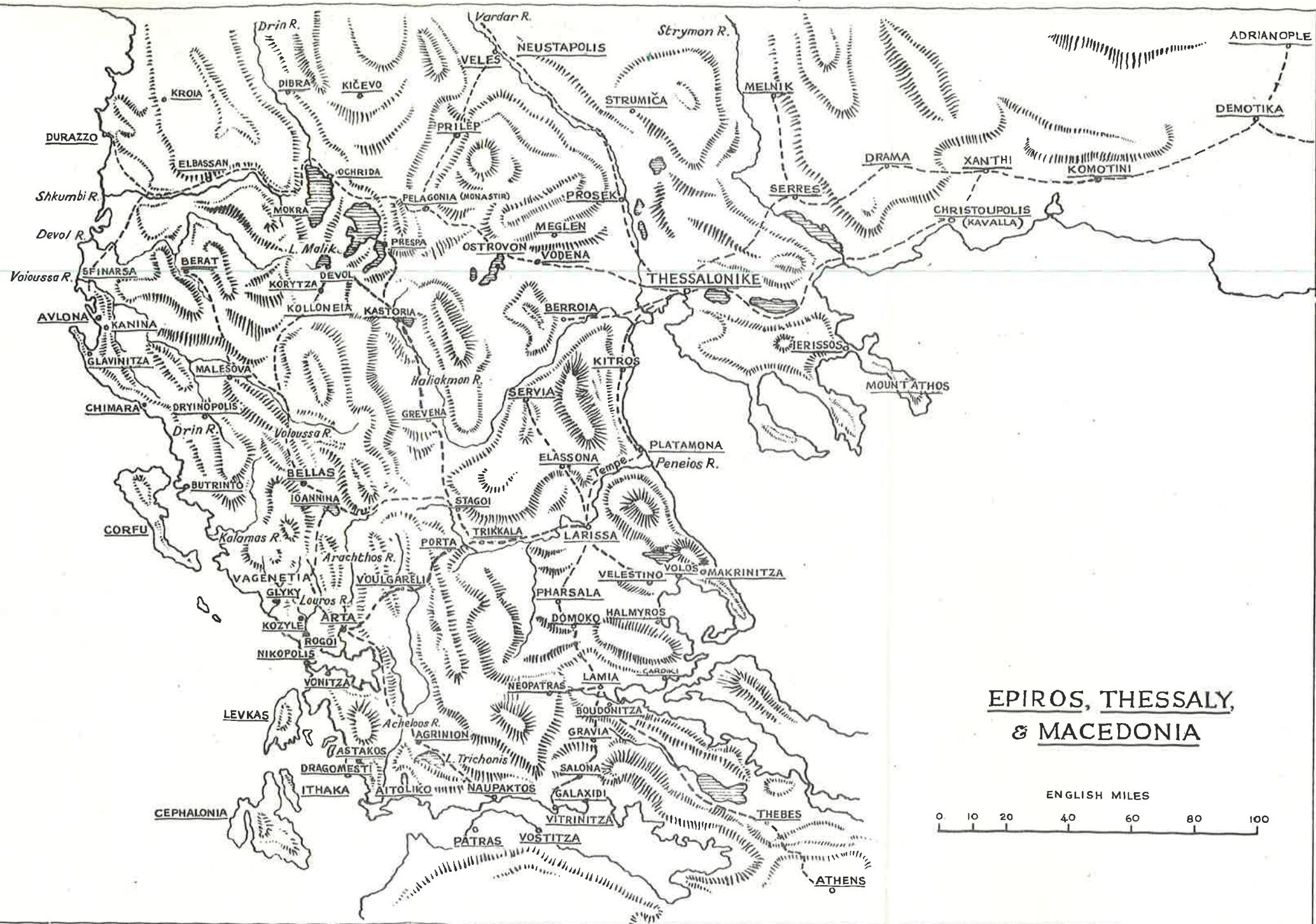
Pogoniani, 226 n. 9
Pojimanenon, 63, 91, 103
Policino, Guy, Genoese ambassador to Epiros, 131
Pompey, 192
Pratanos, Michael, Metropolitan of Thessalonike (1232-35), 118, 123-4
Preljubović, Thomas, Despot of Epiros (1367-84), 211 n. 2
Prenista, 130, 131
Prespa, 151, 163, 177, 186, 224-5
Preveza, 222
Prilep, 49, 59, 111, 125 n. 1, 145, 148, 151-2, 160-5, 181, 186
Prizren (Prizdrianon), 223
Progonos, Albanian chief, 33, 58-9, 145, 224
Pulachas, Nicene general, 165
Radoslav, Stephen, King of Serbia (1228-33), 49, 60, 73 nn. 34 and 35, 122-3
Ragusa, 17, 26, 123, 133, 193, 209, 210
Rainier of Montferrat, 7
Ramatias, Manuel, Nicene general, 165
Raoul, Alexios, Nicene general, 138, 153, 156 n. 16
Raoul, John, Nicene general, 173, 179, 186
Ras, 94, 101 n. 40
Ravenika, 35, 36
Regina, river, *see* Ergene
Rendina, 138
Rhodope, 59
Robert of Alifa, 215
Robert of Clari, historian, 50
Robert of Courtenay, Latin Emperor of Constantinople (1221-28), 52, 60-3, 91, 103, 105, 107, 109
Rogoi, 197, 222
Roland Piche, Lord of Platamona, 73 n. 26
Romaios, 42
'Romania', 7, 29, 52
Roman Church, 32, 33, 41, 45 n. 33, 51, 60, 77, 80-1, 82, 84, 85, 86-7, 117, 149
Romanos, bishop of Durazzo, 101 n. 27

Rome, 4, 5, 39, 50, 76, 77, 83, 86, 98, 107, 115-18, 152, 160
Rostislav Michaelović ('Rosos Uroš'), Russian chief, 158, 169
Rupel pass, 158
'Sacred Band', of Corfu, 143, 155 n. 4
Saladin, 2
Salagora, 15
Salona (Amphissa), 16, 35, 42-3, 51, 57, 174, 178, 225
San Angelo, Castle of, Corfu, 42
San Germano, Richard of, historian, 51
San Germano, Treaty of, 115
San Lorenzo, church of, Rome, 50
Sarandaporos, river, 179
Savas (St.), Archbishop of Serbia, 60, 94
Scythians (Bulgarians), 70, 98
Selymbria, 189, 190
Semavdemonos, Theodore, deacon in Arta, 220
Senacherim, governor of Nikopolis (1204), 11, 13, 16
Senate, at Thessalonike, 68, 93
Serbia, Serbians, 1, 17, 26, 48-9, 59-60, 80, 82, 94, 99, 113, 123, 152, 158, 162-3, 176, 203, 205
Sergius, Archbishop of Ochrida (after 1235), 168 n. 10
Serres, 7, 33, 58-9, 61, 63, 90, 104, 111, 145, 148, 151, 158, 224
Servia, Thessaly, 47, 58-9, 121, 129, 148, 159-61, 179, 215, 225
Sfenarsa, *see* Sphenaritza
Sgouros, Leo, archon of Corinth (1204-08), 10, 12, 13, 14, 25
Siderokastro, 225
Sideroporta, 179
Sicily, 10, 16, 96, 106-7, 109, 115, 143, 150, 166-7, 171, 177, 188, 190, 192-4
Skodra (Skutari), 22 n. 13, 38, 222-3
Skoplje (Skopia), 59, 125 n. 1, 145, 163, 224
Skylliosophos, Dionysios, 197
Slav, Alexios, Despot of Melnik (1207-30), 33, 44 n. 20, 59, 73 n. 29, 104, 113, 125 n. 2, 216
Soskos, 177, 181
Spartenos, of Thessalonike, 146-7
Spercheios, river, 36
Sphenaritza, 18, 166, 223-4
Sphrantzes, husband of Maria Petraliphas, 168 n. 12, 215, 216 n. 8
Stagira, mountains, 104
Stagoi (Kalabaka), 225
Staridola, 136, 140 n. 12, 224
Stenimachos, 145
Stip, 145
Strategopoulos, Alexios, Nicene general, 173, 176, 179, 182, 186-92
Strez (Stratios, Streazos), Dobromir, Lord of Prosek (1207-18), 33-4, 58
Strumica (Stroumnitza), 33, 59, 73 n. 33, 224
Strymon, river, 33, 138, 145, 224
Sybota islands, 167
Symeon, King of Bulgaria (893-927), 20
Symeon, Bishop of Domoko (1219), 45 n. 32
Syria, 13

Taranto, 166, 215
Tarchaneiotes, Nikephoros, Nicene general, 138
Taronas, Vlach chief, 73 n. 27, 155, 156 n. 17
Tempe, 225
Thalassinos, 179
Thaumakos, *see* Domoko
Thebes, 10, 12, 28, 43, 57, 64, 142, 174, 178, 187, 225
Theodora (St.), wife of Michael II of Epiros, *see* Petraliphas
Theodore, Bishop of Cerminik (1210), 31
Thermopylai, 10, 12, 35, 225
Thesprotia, 223
Thessalonike, 2, 7f., 14, 17, 20-1, 26f., 31f., 43, 48-50, 52, 54, 58-70, 73 n. 42, 76, 81-2, 91f., 103-11, 113-25, 125 n. 1, 128-9, 131-9, 141, 144, 146-9, 151-4, 157-63, 165-6, 169f., 172-6, 179, 190, 192-4, 197, 201, 204-9, 211, 223-5
Thessaly, 8f., 11f., 15f., 20, 26f., 29, 35-8, 42, 47, 57-8, 85, 111, 114, 129, 135-6, 141, 148, 154-5, 160,

173f., 178f., 182, 186-9, 196, 200, 215, 225
 Thierry of Walincourt, 63
 Thomas, Bishop of Dryinopolis (1218), 219
 Thomas d'Autremontcourt, Baron of Salona, 35, 44 n. 22
 Thrace, 7, 8, 20, 104-5, 144-5, 154, 158, 159, 190, 215
 Tiberiopolis, *see* Strumica
 Tichomir, Constantine, King of Bulgaria (1257-77), 169, 176, 183 n. 2, 190
 Tichomir, John, archon of Skoplje (1200), 183 n. 2
 Tirnovo, 81, 85, 103, 110, 113-4, 117, 123-4, 169
 Tornikes, Constantine, Sebastokrator of Nicaea, 195 n. 11
 Tornikes, Demetrios, Grand Logothete of Nicaea, 67, 138, 152, 216
 Tornikes, Euthymios, Despot, at Arta, 67
 Trani, 178, 215
 Trebizond, 9, 39, 89, 144
 Trikkala, 16, 36, 186, 200, 225
 Trikorpho, 189, 195 n. 6
 Tripolis, 14
 Turks, 1, 135, 144, 151, 157, 160, 164, 176, 179-80, 196, 215
 Tybalt, Count of Champagne, 3
 Tzakonians, 68, 74 n. 54
 Tzamas, Valos, governor of Berroia, 67
 Tzepaina, 145
 Tziros, *see* Andrew, Metropolitan of Naupaktos
 Tzoumerka, mountain, 130
 Tzurulon, 124, 149
 Urban IV, Pope (1261-64), 193, 195 n. 13
 Urchus, river, 31
 Uroš I, Stephen, King of Serbia (1243-76), 152, 158, 163
 Vagenetia, 18, 31, 223
 Valaresso, Marino, Venetian governor of Durazzo (1205, 1209), 19, 43 n. 5
 Vardar (Axeios), river, 33, 58, 145, 151, 152, 158, 163, 170, 173, 224
 Vatatzes, John III, Emperor of Nicaea (1222-54), 61, 64, 66, 69, 76, 91, 94, 103-5, 118, 123-4, 131, 133, 135-9, 141, 144-54, 157-8, 162, 171, 191, 194, 205-6, 208, 210, 215
 Vatatzes, of Corfu, 140 n. 9
 Velbužd (Kjustendil), 145
 Veles, 145, 151-2, 158, 160, 224
 Velestino, 29, 35-7, 142, 155 n. 3, 225
 Venice, Venetians, 2, 4f., 16f., 21, 24f., 30-2, 37-9, 41-2, 49f., 53, 60, 62-3, 77-8, 103, 106, 125 n. 6, 133, 136, 141-3, 172, 190, 204
 Vessena, 35
 Vetrano, Leone, Genoese pirate, 9-10, 18, 19
 Via Egnatia, 48, 51, 104, 224
 Vigilius, Pope, 82
 Vitrinitza, 225
 Vlachia (Thessaly), 35
 Vlachs, 20, 36, 42, 133, 155, 172-3, 178-9, 182, 187
 Vladislav, King of Serbia (1234-43), 113, 123
 Vlekola (Agrinion), 225
 Vodena (Edessa), 59, 135, 145, 148, 150-1, 153, 158, 164-5, 170, 176, 186, 224-5
 Voiussa (Vjose), river, 116, 223
 Voleron, 176
 Volos, 35-6, 135, 141-2, 225
 Vonitza (Bonditza), 16, 19, 40, 88, 90-1, 102 n. 44, 187, 220-1, 222
 Vostitza (Aigion), 225
 Voulgareli, 203, 210, 225
 Vrechus, river, *see* Urchus
 Warinus, *see* Guérin
 William, Baron of Larissa, 27, 36
 William of Champlite, Prince of Achaia (1205-09), 13, 14, 25, 155 n. 3
 William of Montferrat, 27, 61-4, 98, 105
 William of Verona, 136
 William of Villehardouin, Prince of Achaia (1246-78), 142, 170, 171-5, 178-82, 225
 Xanthi, 104, 111, 193

Xeromeros, 222
 Xeros, John, Metropolitan of Naupaktos (c. 1252-53), 152, 156 n. 14
 Xyleas, Nicene general, 160-5
 Yolanda of Courtenay, Latin Empress of Constantinople (1217-19), 50-1, 54, 60, 86-7
 Zalongo, 223
 Zante (Zakynthos), 10, 17, 19
 Zara, 4
 Zeno, Marino, Venetian Podestà, 18
 Zetounion, *see* Lamia
 Ziani, Pietro, Doge of Venice, 18, 30
 Zichna, 145



EPIROS, THESSALY,
& MACEDONIA

ENGLISH MILES

0 10 20 40 60 80 100